

X

T H E  
DEATH-BED *Repentance*  
Fully Consider'd :

P R O V I N G

That no mere **Death-Bed Repentance** can be effectual to the Salvation of any wicked Liver among Christians ; but only to Infidels, on their first Conversion.

*Tho' very Beneficial to all People, in mitigating or lessening the Pains of Damnation.*

Proving also, That if God sees the *Sick-Bed Repentance* to be sincere in wicked Christians, he will prolong their Life, to bring them into Salvation, by the right and only Way for such, that is by a future good Life.

*And fully Answering all Objections hitherto met with, tho' very Numerous.*

---

By *Edward Nicholson, M. A.*

Author of *The Conference between the Soul and the Body.*

---

D U B L I N :

Printed by *A. Rhames* at the Back of *Dick's Coffee-house* in *Skinner-Row*, ~~St. Andrew's Church~~, 1712.

1607/559.





P R E F A C E  
T O T H E  
R E A D E R.

**T**HERE are such different Biases and various Inclinations in Men's Minds, as well as different Constitutions in their Bodies, that it cannot be expected any one Man's Writings can Please all, be his thought by some the happiest Writer that can Please most. A Christian Writer shou'd not indeed make Men-pleasing his chief Business; but as to his way of Expressing himself, he may consider what will be likeliest to make some Impression on the greatest Part of those he chiefly Writes for. Now if all Readers were of a serious, ingenious, considering Nature, seeking only for Truth, without being influenced by Fancies, or led to extravagant Conceits and Practices, which are sometimes sooner baffled by Sarcasms than Arguments, I wou'd then confess that nothing shou'd be written in Divinity with any Mixture, of what does not contain the greatest Solemnity of Reason, Gravity, and solid Argument; and

## Preface to the Reader.

*Depth of Learning*; which truly many Excellent Men can shew in a much higher Degree than others, and perhaps do confine themselves wholly to it. Their Works then may be of extraordinary Use to the Learned and Soberer studious part of Mankind. But the other sort of Readers having the Majority on their side, we find the Enemies of our Church on all Hands fix upon Fancies and Conceits, which undermine Truth and Soberness, and fall into even ridiculous sinful Practices, which are upheld by Writings, the Confutation of which may sometimes be best help'd by shewing them to be Jest, in such Sarcasms as Elijah gave to the Worshipers of Baal, tho' that ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> the weightiest Subject. This I find my self obliged to Hint at, to obviate some Exceptions taken at some single Passages of my Writings, and particularly in this Book; Sect. 2. Numb. 17. about Popish Charms.

The Learned Mr. Dodwell disliked all appearance of any thing, but the most solid, serious, grave Expressions, in a composed, sedate, and even melancholly Strain all along. Yet he was not so deeply offended at a little Deviation from that, in others now and then, but that he approved highly of Mr. Leslei's Writings against the Quakers, tho' he apprehended some Expressions to be too Sharp, some Light, some Mean, and some Focose. And the like Fault be found with Dr. Patrick's friendly Debates. But I am perswaded Mr. Leslei has Converted more Quakers, and Dr. Patrick more Dissenters, especially among the Vulgar, than

## Preface to the Reader.

Mr. Dodwell and ten more of his Learn'd Way and solid Method has done. And I knew an ordinary Writer much short of Dr. Patrick, or Mr. Lessi, who allowing himself their way of Liberty in Expressions, in his own Sphere, has brought under God several Scores of Papists from Mass to Church. The generality of plain deluded People are such as relish homely Expressions, and sometimes will be more effectually jested out of an Error, than argued out of it. Yet I am far from Pleading that Books of Divinity shou'd be Ludicrous; but when we have to deal with such Divinity-Writers as Mr. Asgill, &c. who certainly are very unse-rious Gentlemen at Religion, if upon some great Provocations given, they meet once or twice with a Sarcasm for their many Jest; or if in like manner our Popish Adversaries, for imposing on us their senseless Doctrines, and monstrous Cheats, shou'd meet with a Rub or two; I hope this shou'd not, in Justice, condemn the Answerer and his Book, which is full of Arguments and Reasons, and Expressions of a better Kind.

This Apology I thought fit to offer more for the sake of some Books I have published before, than for this one; which as it is, will I hope awaken some poor sleeping Christians to a more timely Care of their Eternal State, than they dream it necessary: May the Lord be pleased to bless it to that End, and then I have all I aim at in this Labour.

I know

## Preface to the Reader.

I know any Doctrine, tho' never so agreeable to the Truth of Scripture, if it seems new, by thwarting customary Opinions, will go down but heavily with most People; I shall therefore make but one just Request to the Reader, that he will Please to forbear making his Objections to Particulars, just as they Occur, in his first cursory Reading; least he find most of them obviated somewhere before he has Read it out. But after he has satisfy'd his Curiosity about the whole I aim at, by running it all over first, he may (if he thinks it worth his Pains) make his Objections on second Reading, with second Thoughts: Or else his Labour may be lost in the main against this Book; which I own is writ in a broken Method: Because I was first obliged to repeat what I had formerly but briefly published; and then to follow different Objections from several Hands, each in their own way; And so to add new Enlargements of my Thoughts, in Places distant from their proper Heads. I now recommend the Christian Reader to the Blessing and Guidance of our good God and Saviour; and beg they will Charitably Instruct me in my Errors, and I shall be ready, upon Conviction, to forsake such Errors, and Reform with the Grace of God.

The



# The Contents.

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                |         |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| I | Ntroduction                                                                                                                                                                    | Page 1. |
|   | Sect. I.                                                                                                                                                                       |         |
|   | Of the true Notion of Saving Faith                                                                                                                                             | 3       |
|   | Of the various Acceptations of Faith in<br>Scripture                                                                                                                           | 5       |
|   | Of Justification by Faith only without good<br>Works                                                                                                                           | 12      |
|   | and continued to                                                                                                                                                               | 20      |
|   | Sect. II.                                                                                                                                                                      |         |
|   | Of the true Notion of Saving Repentance                                                                                                                                        | 21      |
|   | That no mere Death-Bed Repentance can be<br>effectual to the Salvation of any wicked<br>Liver among Christians, proved                                                         | 25      |
|   | That Baptismal Repentance is saving, with-<br>out a past good Life, being of another sort,<br>only for new Converts to Christianity                                            | 28      |
|   | Eight several Objections answer'd, beginning at                                                                                                                                | 37      |
|   | That it is God's Prerogative to reprieve and<br>prolong a wicked Sinner's Life on his<br>Death-Bed, if he see his Resolution of li-<br>ving Christianly to be true and sincere | 49      |
|   | and 50, 51, 52, 53, 54 ; and again 59,<br>96, 142                                                                                                                              |         |
|   | Death-Bed Repentance very beneficial e-<br>ven to Reprobates, by mitigating or les-<br>sening the Pains of Damnation, tho not<br>sincere enough for Salvation                  | 55      |



## The Contents.

*The great usefulness, and absolute necessity to Religion, of this Doctrine, about the vanity of the Death-Bed's Repentance, as to the Salvation of those that die in a wicked Life, after being Christians* } 61

### SECT. III.

*Of the many Objections that have occur'd since the first Publication of the above Doctrine* } 64

*Sir Robert King's Objections answered* } 66

*How that easie Doctrine of the Death-Bed's Hopes, got such Footing among us* } 77

*Dr. Scott's Objections answer'd* } 78

*Several Objections from a most worthy Friend answer'd* } 84

*Several Objections in a Manuscript Book, written by Mr. Keys, according to the Calvinists Scheme, against the Author of this Book, fully answer'd* } 88

*The Miracle objected, about Recovery of the Sick, if his Repentance be sincere, answer'd at large.* } 99

*Mr. Keys's second Book, in Reply to the above Answer, fully consider'd and answer'd* } 112

*This Doctrine against the Death-Bed Repentance confirm'd by a Cloud of Witnesses, of the most Pious, dead and living* } 137

*All that may be any ways thought new in this Doctrine, consider'd and further vindicated* } 142

*The Conclusion* } 146

*A Postscript answering some more Objections* } 149

THE



I

---

---

T H E  
I N T R O D U C T I O N .

61  
64  
66  
77  
78  
84  
88  
99  
112  
137  
142  
146  
149  
E

**A**LL ill-liv'd Christians do readily fall in with, and are fond of, the false Notions of an easie saving Faith, and saving Repentance, as what makes for their purpose, of defending themselves in their indulged Wickedness and Debaucheries : And what is yet worse, many of those that would be thought Zealots in Religion, do too much countenance the perverting those two Fundamentals of Christian Doctrines, Faith and Repentance ; and even among our own good Clergy that rightly maintain the true Faith and Repentance, there are yet some, that either through Prepossession, byas of Education, or Inadvertency, and want of sufficient Caution and Scrutiny, do too loosely handle that particular Point of the meer *Deash-Bed Repentance*, and allow too much to it.

This I am made daily more and more sensible of, since the former Publication of my Thoughts on that Subject ; tho' I am also more confirm'd in the truth of what I then wrote, by finding many most Pious and Learned Men in the Church of *England* of greatest Worth, more numerous than I, at that time, knew of, who do hold with me, and countenance the same Doctrine I have deliver'd ; and some of them taught it long before me. I have had many Letters sent me upon this occasion, with Objections also ; which I having answer'd, some of those worthy and pious Correspondents, whose urgent Requests I could not resist, made me promise to re-publish what I had formerly writ on that Subject, without clogging it with



any thing else ; but only to enlarge it with the Examination of what other Objections occur'd to me since ; and to elucidate the whole somewhat more, as I thought fit.

The Performance of this Promise has engag'd me in this small Undertaking, wherein my desire to shorten the Reader's Trouble, will not let me exceed this little Compass, which yet I hope will be enough to satisfy the pious, and ingenious, and all candid People

I shall herein, besides my Enlargements, repeat what I very briefly published before on this Subject ; both, that the whole of what I have offer'd upon it may lie entire together, and that the Reader may not be obliged to enquire after my former Book ; which I believe is not now easily to be had, the whole Impression being gone : But all that there belong'd to this Matter is here, with the Addition of as much more. I shall distribute what this little Book contains, into three Parts or Sections.

*I. Of the true Notion of saving Faith.*

*II. Of the true Notion of saving Repentance, and particularly concerning that pretence of the Death-Bed one.*

*III. Of the many Objections that have occur'd since my first Publication of this Doctrine, with their Answers.*

---

THE



---

# THE

## *Death-Bed Repentance, &c.*

---

### S E C T. I.

*Of the true Notion of saving Faith.*

I. **T**HE Notion of Faith being as liable to pernicious Mistakes, as that of Repentance, I shall handle them both severally. But first in general I must remark this of both at once, that there is a two-fold sort of Faith and Repentance, and both saving to the respective Parties they belong to: One sort of Faith and Repentance is for Infidels, at their first coming to Christ and his Baptism; the other sort of Faith and Repentance is for Christians that have lived ill after Baptism. The first sort is a believing in Christ, with a sorrow for past Sins, and a sincere resolution to forsake them. This on first coming to Christ from Infidelity, will on Baptism certainly save him that was the wickedest Liver before, if he died that moment. The other sort of Faith and Repentance, that will be saving to Christians after Baptism, must be a more proved, mature, and compleat Faith and Repentance; a strong practical Faith which is perfected by Works. As the nourishment which nourishes a Child, and keeps it alive after Quickning until its Birth, is of a different sort from that which it must be nourished with after it is born, and comes to live in the wide World; which must be then more

#### 4 The Death-Bed Repentance

perfect and compleat by the addition of other Qualities. So the Faith and Repentance of baptized Christians in the state of Regeneration or new Birth (which our Saviour compares it to) must be of a more perfect, mature sort, than at first was necessary, and more compleat by the addition of other Qualities to it, must be *perfected by Works*, when the Christian comes to live anew in the World, by the new Life of Christianity; every Sin then tends to the destruction of his spiritual Life, and every Virtue, or practical Work of Faith and Repentance, tends to the recruiting and saving of his spiritual Life, and consequently of his Soul: Faith or Repentance will then do him no good, unless they be of such a sort; a mature, working Faith and Repentance, *perfected by Works*, else the spiritual Life, and the Soul, will certainly be destroy'd.

None can question but that a farther degree of Faith and Repentance is required from a Christian, who lives in the bosom of the Church, and especially after Lapse, than what is strictly necessary in order to his first admittance into the Church. 'Tis not to be doubted, but that by being engrafted into Christ's mystical Body, together with the benefit of his Word, and Sacraments, a Man is put into a better Capacity, and has also greater Opportunities for making a progress in true Piety, than what he can be suppos'd to have before he is baptized. So that every Christian is bound to *grow in Grace*, according to the Capacities which God has given him. And if he relapse to ill Life, he must yet have a stronger and greater Repentance: Therefore Baptismal Faith or Repentance, and the Faith or Repentance of lapsed Christians, are not of the same sort or degree.

Now to cut off some Cavils that may be objected against the ineffectualness of a meer Death-Bed Repentance, by the usual urging of a Salvation by Faith only, without good Works. I shall first begin with this Doctrine of Faith, before I handle that of Repentance.



II. Divine Faith in general is nothing else but *believing, or giving assent to something on the Authority of God.* This definition being first fix'd in our Minds, we can never be at a loss in answering that Question, *What is Divine Faith?* But then to shew how many different Senses the Word Faith may be used in, we should observe, that —

Faith is a Word of many and various acceptations in the New Testament, sometimes it signifies a believing that there is a God, contrary to *the Fool, who saith in his Heart there is no God: And without such Faith 'tis impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, Heb. 11. 6.* Sometimes 'tis an historical Faith, in believing the Histories and Matters of Fact, related in the Scripture; all this, even the *Devils, do believe, and tremble, James 2. 19.* Sometimes 'tis taken for Christian Liberty in opposition to Judaism or the Law of Circumcision, which Law of Circumcision is the only thing meant in most places where the Law is oppos'd to Faith, as *Rom. 4. 14. If they which are of the Law be Heirs, Faith is made void.* And many other places, where the Context shews the Law to mean Judaism, this Faith, many wicked Men might have, for there were many that believed Christianity in opposition to Judaism, and yet remain'd unreform'd in their Lives, and *held the Truth in unrighteousness, Rom. 1. 18.* As we are told that even *Simon the Sorcerer Believed and was Baptized, Acts 8. 13.* Sometimes Faith is taken for believing the Power of Christ to cure Diseases, as Christ said to the Blind Men, *Mat. 9. 28. Believe ye that I am able to do this? according to your Faith be it unto you.* So *Luke 8. 48, to the Woman, Thy Faith hath made thee whole.* And St. Paul seeing a Cripple, and perceiving that he had Faith to be healed, *had him stand upright on his Feet, Acts 14. 9, 10.* Sometimes Faith is taken for that peculiar disposition of Spirit, which empower'd People to work Miracles, as *Mat. 17. 20. If ye have Faith as a Grain of Mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this Mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to*

## 6 The Death-Bed Repentance

you. Now it's certain this was a particular sort of Faith appropriated to the Gift of Miracles, and not the general *saving Faith*; for of that saving Faith many Christians had much, that yet could not work Miracles, as Christ said of the Centurion, *Luke 7. 9. I have not found so great Faith, no not in Israel.* And to the Woman of Canaan, *Mat. 15. 28. O Woman! great is thy Faith.* Yet neither could the Centurion heal his Servant, nor the Woman her Daughter. But the least Grain of t'other sort of Miracle-working Faith in either of them, would have made them done the business themselves. Miracles were in the first Ages of the Gospel necessary for planting Christianity both against Judaism, and against the settled Paganism of the World, and the universal Power of Heathen Princes. Therefore this Gift of Miracles was shed abroad among the other Gifts of Tongues and Prophecies, each by that peculiar disposition of Faith, (thro' the distribution of the Spirit of God) which was proper for the Gift intended, as the Apostle sums them up, *To another the working of Miracles; to another Prophecie; to another discerning of Spirits; to another divers kinds of Tongues, &c——the self-same Spirit dividing to every Man severally as he will, 1 Cor. 12. 11.* Now it is plain that all these extraordinary Gifts of Faith and the Spirit, were severally given to many that yet had not the true saving Faith, and were to be shut out of the Kingdom of Heaven; witness our Saviour's Words as to Miracles and Prophecies, *Mat. 7. 22, of many that should prophesie and cast out Devils in his Name, and yet be shut out of Heaven.* Whatever account was made of the Faith of Miracle-working in those Days, 'tis certain Miracles are ceased in these Ages, there being not the like use or occasion for them. And so we are not to expect (nor is there any) such sort of Faith now-a-days in the World. Sometimes Faith is taken for the dictate of Conscience about the lawfulness of doing an Action, as *Rom. 14. 23. He that doubteth is damnd if he eat, because he eateth not of Faith.* Many other notions of Faith there are; sometimes it is one of



of the three Graces, in distinction from Hope, and Charity; sometimes Confidence in Prayer; sometimes Fidelity in our Employments; sometimes relying on Christ's Promises for Spiritual or Temporal Blessings, &c.

III. But where ever Faith is made the adequate condition of our Salvation, it must be understood to be of a more universal Import than any or all of these above named. The general *complete Faith* of Christians (which only can intitle them to Salvation) must in the extension of its true meaning be Comensurate to the Object thereof, in all its parts; and the Object of such Faith under God is *the whole Gospel of Christ*. Now if we embrace the whole Gospel, receive it with obedient Hearts, and comply truly with it in its whole Design, we are then truly Faithful; and shall undoubtedly on perseverance in this Faith be Saved. This is the true saving Faith: And 'tis plain, what embracing or receiving, and complying with the whole Gospel is, that is believing and complying with all its parts, and acting according to the Design of the whole. The parts of the Gospel are, *First*, Histories, *2dly*, Doctrines, *3dly*, Covenants, *4thly*, Precepts and Ordinances, *5thly*, Promises, *6thly*, Threatenings; if we so believe, as to receive and comply with each and every of these respectively as we ought, we are true Believers. And then, but not otherwise (after Age and Capacity for it, and a publication of it to us, with Baptism) we may reckon upon God's Promise of Salvation, as belonging to us. In a Word, saving Faith in Christ, is so to believe in him, as to obey him; and nothing else will, without this, be accepted to our Justification: All other attempts for Heaven are vain, after being Christians, or having the Gospel sufficiently proposed to us.

A true Gospel Faith, must first make us believe the History and Doctrine of the Gospel. *2dly*, It must put us on the performing our part of the Gospel-Covenant; for the Covenant is between God and us, - I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure

*Mercies of David, Isaiah 55. 3.* And this is that Covenant God has made with us in Christ, of the Legal Decent of *David*, according to the Flesh; who is called the Mediator of a better Covenant, *Heb. 8. 6.* which shews there was a former Covenant, out dated, with which our Faith is not now concern'd, that is called *the Covenant of Works*, i. e. the Jewish Works of Circumcision, Purifications, outward Cleansing and Washings; in one word, the ceremonial Law of *Moses*, which Covenant was made only with the Jewish Nation, and was mostly but Types and Shaddows of Things to come.

IV. But the Covenants made by God with all Mankind, as being made with *Adam*, the Father of them all, are two; the first required perfect unsinning Obedience on Man's part; and this may be sometime meant by the *Covenant of Works* too, in opposition to the *Covenant of Faith in a Redeemer*, because it accepted nothing short of sinless Perfection in all Works of Righteousness: For had *Adam* committed any sort of Wickedness, even against the light of Nature, it had, as well as eating the forbidden Fruit, made him liable to God's Wrath; and so to eternal Death. But continuing obedient, he should have that perfection and strength of Nature, in which he was Created, continued to him, and at last a Translation to the eternal happiness of Heaven without dying: All which, tho' we are not told of in express words, was undoubtedly reveal'd to him, it being by natural Consequence deducible from, and founded on God's Justice and Goodness. This Covenant he breaking, he fell from the glorious Conditions of it, and was liable to eternal Death.

Then God of his Mercy, makes a second Covenant with him in Christ the Redeemer, which is intimated in that Promise, *Gen. 3. 15.* *That the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Head of the Serpent*; so assuring us of a Redeemer, that should deliver us from the eternity of Death and Damnation; and that this Redemption was to be on condition of our Believing that Redeemer,

deemer, so as to obey him, in our living a future good Life, such as our present condition is capable of; sincerity instead of Perfection, honest performance of the weightier Matters of the Law, instead of an absolute sinless Sanctity; and where we fall, recovering by true and sincere Repentance, to integrity of Life, and virtuous practice again, as that Redeemer shou'd teach us, and assist us by his blessed Spirit, given in his holy Ordinances. That this is the condition of our Redemption, and the thing required on our part to entitle us to Christ's Redemption, is plain by the tenure of the whole Gospel; and the Sacraments are the ways of Ratification or Application of this Covenant in Christ's Blood, to every one in particular. By *Baptism*, we enter; by the *Lord's-Supper*, we confirm, and constantly renew our Covenant, and obtain strength to perform it. The very nature of a *Covenant* implies something to be perform'd on both sides: And a *true Gospel Faith* must thus make us not only believe the thing, but also perform our part of the Covenant; that is, obey the Precepts of the Gospel, which reaches us the will of the Redeemer. And as the Gospel Promises are all conditional, and our *obeying or performing*, those Conditions are as necessary to compleat a saving Faith; as our *believing* the Promises: So the *Threats* also contain'd in the Gospel, are as much the Object of our Faith, as any other part of the Gospel; and if we firmly believe those Threats to the Disobedient, and the true dreadfulnes of those unexpressible everlasting Torments to the evil Livers, we will then certainly avoid those courses against which such dreadful Sentences are pronounced, or else we have no true saving Faith; and do but mock Christ with any other pretence of Faith.

I have spoke nothing all this while distinctly of our Duty to continue in the belief of the true Catholick Church, and in Communion of the Saints; of that one undivided true Christian Altar, without which our Faith cannot be saving; because this is presupposed in our believing and complying with the whole

Gospel

Gospel in all its parts, and is expressed in two of the Articles of our Creed; so that the exigence of our present subject lay not this way, but to oppose the Errors of those that seem to comply with the true Communion, and yet abuse the Notion of saving Faith; and to let them see upon all accounts, *true saving Faith* can be none but such as produces a good Life in sincere Obedience.

V. To shew unanswerably, that this is the true state of the matter, I shall quote some of those Texts by which we hold our Tenure. *If ye love me*, says Christ, *keep my Commandments*, John. 15. 14. *Ye are my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I Command you*, John 15. 14. The Good, and consequently the truly Faithful, are they which in an honest and good Heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth Fruit with patience, Luke, 8. 15. And Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it, Luke 11. 28. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a Man keep my saying, he shall never see Death* (i. e. eternal Death) John 8. 51. *If a Man love me, he will keep my Words, and my Father will love him*, John 14. 23. 'Tis the just shall live by Faith, and not they who hold the truth in Unrighteousness, Rom. 1. 17, 18. *Christ is the Author of eternal Salvation to all them that obey him*. Heb. 5. 9. To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, &c. eternal Life, Rom. 2. 7. That Grace might reign thro' Righteousness to eternal Life, Rom. 5. 21. That they who have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good Works, Titus 3. 8. called laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold <sup>on</sup> eternal Life, 1 Tim. 6. 19. *If I have all Faith, and have not Charity, 'tis nothing*, 1 Cor. 13. 2. Faith and a good Conscience, which some having put away, concerning Faith have made Shipwrack, 1 Tim. 1. 19. Professing Science falsely so called, they have err'd concerning the Faith, 1 Tim. 6. 21. Neither Circumcision nor Uncircumcision availeth, but keeping the Commandments of God, 1 Cor. 7. 19. Holding the mystery of Faith in a pure Conscience, 1 Tim. 3. 9. The not doing Christian Duties, as providing for his own Family, is called denying the Faith, he hath denied

*denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel, 1 Tim. 5. 8. Men of corrupt minds, are Reprobates concerning the Faith, 2 Tim. 3. 8. What doth it profit if he hath Faith, and no Works? can Faith save him? Jam. 2. 14. Faith, if it have not Works, is dead, ver. 17. Wilt thou know O vain Man! that Faith without Works is dead, ver. 20. Was not Abraham justified by Works? and by Works was Faith made perfect, ver. 21, 22. You see then how that by Works a Man is justified, and not by Faith only, ver. 24.*

VI. We'll find at last, that the main Design and whole End of Divinity, and all Religion, is, *to teach us to deny Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, and to live Soberly, Righteously and Godly in this present World, Tit. 2. 12. For there are those that profess that they know God, but in Works they deny him, Tit. 1. 16. Why call ye me Lord, Lord, (says Christ) and do not the thing which I say, Luke 6. 46. St. Paul exhorts us, to remember them that have Rule over us, whose Faith follow, Heb. 13. 7. And be followers of them that thro' Faith and Patience have inherited the Promise, Heb. 6. 12. And be ye followers of me, as I am Christ, 1 Cor. 11. 1. And walk as ye have us for an Example, Phil. 3. 17*

Let us therefore, in short, know this Conclusion from all the above Premises, that there is no other saving Faith for Christians, but such as produces a sincere cordial Obedience to the whole Gospel, and all its Precepts. I say, not without all sin, all blemish, all imperfection, but yet without Falseness, Faithfulness, Hypocrisy, Dishonesty, or Debauchery; and if such courses have overtaken any one, then he must be timely renewed again, by a true severe Repentance and Reformation, to such a final good Life, and honest habitual Practice before he Dyes; that upon the upshot, he may at last be truly denominated a Virtuous, Just, Good Man, and honest Liver; without which, no other Faith, of what definition soever, no fiducial Reliance, no strength of Confidence, or charm of Imagination, shall avail him hereafter, nor any that shall call themselves Christians. And this we shall all find to be true, *on that day when God shall judge the secrets of Men by Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel.*



VII. Our blessed Saviour has sum'd up the whole matter with the clearest Evidence, in that plain account of it, *Mat. 7. 19. Every Tree that bringeth not forth good Fruit, is hewn down and cast into the Fire, wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them*: Know whom? the true Believers, from the false Prophets, ver. 15. who pretend as much (nay more) Faith; therefore says the next words, *Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, (that profess the greatest Faith in Christ as their Lord and Saviour) shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.* And to put the case past all evasion, he adds, in the next words, ver. 22. *Many shall say to me in that Day, (in what day? in the day of entering into the Kingdom of Heaven, as in the words just forgoing) Lord, Lord, have we not Prophesied in thy Name, and in thy Name cast out Devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful Works; (here's greater effects of Faith than all the Fiduciaries and Solifidians of this Age can shew:) Yet mark their Answer, ver. 23. and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you (i. e. to be any of mine) depart from me; (and why so?) because they were Workers of Iniquity.*

And this same Doctrine, to shew the great importance of it, our Saviour has inculcated more than once: For here 'tis in his Sermon on the Mount, which Sermon is concluded by *St. Luke*, in the 6th Chapter; and yet after a long Series of following Histories and Miracles, we are told by *St. Luke* in the 13th Chapter, that upon occasion of one asking our Saviour a Question, (ver. 23. *then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be Saved.*) Christ declares again this same Doctrine in Substance, and concludes, ver. 27. *I tell you, I know not whence ye are, depart from me all ye Workers of Iniquity.*

VIII. Yet some will still persist to object, that we are justified by Faith only without good Works. But I Answer, this is false, that any Christian should be finally justified without good Works, that had time to do them, and did them not. The 11th Article of our Church

Church says, that *we are justified by Faith only*; but does not say *without good Works*, but only by Faith in Christ only. Now the Word *only* there, means in opposition both to judaical Works, or any other our own Works done before we had Faith; or in opposition to the Merits of any other, or to Faith in any other Saviour; or in opposition to any other method of Salvation, Jewishly, or Paganly, or Turkishly perform'd, how precise soever: In opposition to all this, I say, we are justified by the Christian Faith only, or Faith in Christ only; but not in opposition to good Works; the Works of Christian Righteousness, which are done in and through the Faith of Christ. For what Faith is this of Christ that we are justified by? Is it not an obedient Faith, *a Faith working by Love*, Gal. 5. 6. *a Faith perfected by Works; by Works is Faith made perfect*. Jam. 2. 22. Our Faith is a believing Christ so as to obey him. If you abstract Faith from this obedience in good Works, then no Man is justified by such a solitary Faith, after coming to live in Christ's Faith, any more than he can by solitary Works of the Law, even of the moral Law, without Faith, And least that Word *only* should be taken in the wrong Sence to exclude good Christian Works, I desire you to observe, that there is no one Text in all the Bible uses that Phrase, that we are *justified by Faith only*; tho' our Church says true, that we are justified by Faith only, in the Sence I have told you: For *Faith only* was the modish Phrase then against the Popish Doctrine of Merits. But as there is no one Text in all the Bible uses that Phrase, that we are justified by Faith only; so there is a very plain Text, that says most expressly the contrary, Jam. 2. 24. *To see then how that by Works a Man is justified, and not by Faith only.*

It has often been the Subject of my Admiration, why we should (among Believers) make such a noise with (and trouble the Christian World so much about) the notion of Faith, which is the plainest thing in the World? as if we would disguise it in so many Dresses that no body should know it; which must certainly

## 14 The Death-Bed Repentance

tainly proceed from the artifice of Deceivers, who as it is foretold, they should say, some, *Lo here is Christ*, and some, *lo, there is Christ*: So it's now, lo, here is Faith, and lo, there is Faith; and that in so many several Shapes, till at last poor doubting Christians are so bewildred that they know not what Faith is; and yet nothing is more obvious. Faith in general can mean nothing else, but a believing something on the Testimony of his that tells it: And if a Divine Testimony, then 'tis a Divine Faith: And so, as the believing the Divine Revelation of the *Mosaick* Religion from God by *Moses*, was the *Mosaick* Faith, so, I say the believing the Divine Revelation of the Christian Religion from God by Christ, is the Christian Faith. So, that Faith in Christ is nothing else but to believe in him, to believe his Word or Gospel to be true. The believing thus in Christ, is the thing which the Scripture constantly calls Faith in Christ; which should bring People first to the believing of him, that so we might be taught to obey him: This is the End, t'other the Means; or if you will, this is the Effect, t'other the Cause. Therefore the only main thing which was first to be pressed upon the Infidel World, was Faith in Christ, and to encourage their coming into that Faith; great Rewards were promised to all that should embrace it; even Justification, or plenary Forgiveness of all their Sins, upon their first coming with sincere penitent Resolutions to the Baptism, which enter'd them in Christ's Flock: But when they are once in, and do believe, Faith is no more press'd upon them in Scripture (unless by way of Perseverance) because they have it already. All the multiplicit Recommendations of Faith in Scripture are still to the Infidels or Unbelievers; but to the Baptized Christians, the Duties of Obedience are still urged and press'd upon them; and a returning by Repentance to good Life after Lapse, Obedience to the Gospel they have embraced is then their Duty, without which, they will lose that Salvation they were entitled to by their Faith at first. For it were better not to have known the way of Righteousness

*Righteousness* (says the Apostle, 2 Pet. 2. 1.) *than after they had known it, to turn away from the Holy Commandment*; that is, to live wilfully and finally in ill Lives. Now therefore that which makes their first justifying Faith (which had sav'd them if they had dy'd then) to be after Lapse again finally saving, is their future Obedience in good Life, being *obedient to the Faith, Acts 6. 7.* Their Obedience to the Gospel of Christ, which Gospel includes Precepts as well as Promises. Nay, the principal part of the Gospel implys Obedience primarily, before the Promises can be ours. For after the first Promise of absolute present Forgiveness upon our Baptism, with Believing and sincere penitent Resolutions, all other Promises to Christians are conditional, that is upon condition of obeying the Gospel, and complying sincerely with the design of it, which is to *teach us to deny Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, and to live Soberly, Righteously, and Godly in this present World, Tit. 2. 12.* If we do not thus we shall be dis-inherited, unjustify'd again, or rejected, and our Names that were written in the Book of Life, upon our Justification at first by Faith and Baptism, shall be blotted out of the Book of Life again, and will not be found there at the Day of Judgment. *Rev. 3. 5. God shall blot his Name out of the Book of Life.* See also *Rev. 22. 19. Exod. 32. 33. Psal. 69. 28.*

All this Scheme is as plainly demonstrable through the whole Scripture, as any thing that is in it. And what do we then keep such a jangling for, about a Faith? which has nothing to do with the main Task that is set before converted Christians in Scripture; they must be suppos'd to have that already, and it will increase of it self by the practice of Obedience, that same Duty of Faith is so often pressed in Scripture upon the account of Infidels, or those that do not yet believe, and are not come to the Faith of Christ; this is their first Task. But to such as are come in already, there is, indeed, a greater Task laid on them, that is, Obedience to that Gospel of Christ which they do believe. And here lies the whole of our remaining  
Duty

## 16 The Death-Bed Repentance

Duty and Concern then, and is the very thing for which Believing was intended. For even Christ had this only End and Design upon us in giving himself for us. *Tit. 2. 14. He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all Iniquity,* (from the Practice as well as the Punishment of Iniquity) *and purify us to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works.* If we will be thus redeem'd from the Slavery and Service (that is the Practice) of Sin, then our Faith will obtain its End in our final Justification, Sanctification, and Salvation. But if we will not be thus redeem'd from Sin, our Faith will prove vain, lose its End, and signify nothing but to aggravate our Damnation.

Now because this Faith is the only proper means to our Obedience (which Obedience the Rewards are annexed to) and the Cause of it; therefore the whole of what such Obedience effects, and the Rewards promised for it, are sometimes ascribed to Faith indefinitely, as being indeed the Source of all; tho' Faith be most usually taken in opposition to Infidelity, to justify us at our first Conversion to Christianity, from the Jewish or Heathen Unbelief; yet very often in Scripture all the Promises are mentioned (even Justification, Salvation, and all) to a part of our Duty, where yet the whole is to be understood; and so Pardon of our Sins (which is Justification) is not only promised to Faith, but to Confession of Sins; *If we confess our Sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins,* 1 John 1. 9. But in this must still be understood our true Amendment and the whole Duty of Obedience in the contrary Virtues. And so to Prayer also; *The Lord is ready to forgive all that call upon him,* Psal. 145. 18. *Ask (says Christ) any thing in my Name, and I will do it,* John 14. 14. But still it must be understood that we be obedient Children to God in our whole Practice. So also 'tis promised to our Fear of God; *God's Mercy is on them that fear him,* Luke 1. 50. But under this Fear must still be understood a true sincere Obedience. So also might be instanced in many other Particulars, to which all the Eternal Rewards are promised



promised as well as to Faith. But still the whole of our Obedience is understood by them, and those Particulars to which the proper Rewards of Obedience are promised, are all Springs and Principles of our Obedience, and either the Causes, or chief Influences of our Obedience; which Obedience principally is the thing, Christ proposes and promises those Rewards for, through his whole Gospel. So that to distinguish by a Trick this Obedience from any of those previous parts of our Duty (let it be Faith it self) so as to deprive our Obedience in the Duty of good a Life from having any share of those Rewards and Promises which Christ annexes all along chiefly to them (that is by our denying, as some do, *them Works to be any Ingredients in the business of our Justification, and consequently Salvation*) must needs be of fatal consequence to the generality of carnal Christians, who will catch at any thing else, to avoid the difficulty of Obedience. So that we who oppose such Teachers cannot see what good that abstracted Metaphysical Notion of Faith can do, but a great deal of mischief; nor what hurt the joyning sincere Obedience with it can do, but a great deal of good. Nay, we fear such putting those asunder that God hath joyned together, would at last tend to overthrow the whole Gospel of Christ, and give advantages to Jews, Turks, and Heathens, against us. Not to mention the great disadvantages we should lie under in our Disputes with learn'd *Papalins*, who, it cannot be deny'd, have sufficiently baffled the *Fiduciary's* way, of being saved without good Works; tho' instead of it, they have always held as bad a way of their own, in the other extreme of Merits, which we can baffle also. *Medio tutissimus ibis*. The middle way is the safest.

IX. Now I have shewn what the true saving Faith of adult or grown Christians must be, after having lived ill in Christianity; I must re-assume what I spake to, in the beginning of this Discourse; that there is another sort, or lesser degree of saving Faith, for Infidels, or those that never profess'd Christianity before,

## 18      The Death-Bed Repentance

fore, upon their first coming over to the Gospel, there is no other Faith than required of them to qualify them for Baptism, and consequently for Salvation, if they were to die that Instant ; but only to believe the Creed, to believe in the Saviour of the World, in Christ Jesus, and embrace his Gospel, and be baptized in this Faith with penitence, it washes away all Sin, both original and actual, from their Birth to that time. *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved,* says our Saviour, *Mark 16. 16. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, Acts 16. 31.* And many other places, which includes still Penitence with sincere resolution of a good Life.

This difference of the first degree of Faith, required of those that are to be converted from Infidelity, and the other more compleat and practical Faith, by the addition of the future good Works, to perfect it by a good Life, required of all those that are already enter'd by Baptism. This difference, I say, not being consider'd, has been the occasion of all the Errors of the *Solifidians, Fiduciarys, and Antinomians.*

The World has been fill'd with many large Volumes written about Faith, and all to no purpose. But that it has rais'd many Wrangles and Mischiefs among Christians, for all those manifold Scriptures they build upon, which press and recommend Faith so much (as I said before, and must repeat again) have nothing to do with us, that are in the Faith already, further than to urge Perseverance ; they were intended for Infidels, Jews, Heathens, and Unbelievers, to bring them to the Faith of Christ, that was therefore then the only Doctrine to be insisted on to such ; and to bring them to the Belief of Christ, the highest Promises were made to Faith in him. Even full Remission of all Sins, Adoption, Justification, Sanctification, Salvation and all. Which was true and made good to them even in the very entrance, if they then dy'd it self. But after entrance to the Faith, then nothing was insisted upon but Obedience to the Laws of that Saviour whose Faith they had receiv'd.

The

The first bare Faith, or original notion of Faith, was no longer the Task then, but the complex Faith perfected by Works, was altogether insisted on to those that believ'd already. As for the Lessons about the first sort of Faith, they were past that Primer, and left it to other Beginners. This is plainly evidenced from the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard. The Vineyard is Christ's Church, the Unbelievers are call'd by Faith to come into the Vineyard, or Church of Christ; but when they are in, their business there, is to work: And 'tis not the high value of their coming in, they must insist upon to entitle them to their Wages, but their doing the Work, which was the *Unum necessarium*. Faith at first was but the Introduction to the working Duty. And must we still be pressing only or chiefly the entering Duty to them that are enter'd already? Oh, but, some will cry, The true Faith, the true Faith. Why, true Faith, I say, is nothing else but true Obedience in all good Works of Christian Practice, added to the Belief of Christ, or wrought in and through Faith in him. But if you take the stress of the principal part, that is good Works or good Life, and lay the whole upon any other sort of Faith, by the name of true Faith; then every Sect, Heresy, and Party in the World will pretend their own Scheme to be the true Faith. And Popery it self will pretend believing Transubstantiation, and the rest of *Rome's* Fables, to be the true Faith. 'Tis a Mistake to think Popery lays all upon good Works; they speak much for it, and add their Doctrine of Merits, but they are of those that say, and do not; and if you have never so much good Works with them, yet that is not their saving Doctrine, but the believing their Church, their Merits of the Mass, their Pope's Supremacy, &c. which they call the true Faith. And so will others of the contrary Extreme pretend believing the particulars of their voluminous Systems, to be the true Faith. But the true saving Faith of the Church of *England*, to those that are already in Christianity, is the living a

Good Life, in the Works of Charity, and Purity, through believing the Apostles Creed, with the *Athanasian* Explication of it. Do you believe the Faith you were baptized in? Do you believe the Apostles Creed, and add no other Articles to it? You have Faith enough then of that first sort; set but that a working, and there lies your business; and you'll soon perceive that it will find you Work enough. This is the Church of *England's* Faith and Religion, the same which was the Primitive Church's, and *St. James's pure Religion and undefiled, to visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep our selves unspotted from the World.* The express Duty of the Works of all good Life, which is comprized in Charity, and Purity; for Charity excludes all Injustice, and Purity excludes all filthiness of *Flesh and Spirit*; so that Charity and Purity together, do perfect Holiness in the fear of the Lord, 2 Cor. 7. 1. and do compleat *St. James's pure and undefiled Religion before God, and the Father, James 1. 27.* This true working Faith of Obedience in the Works of Christian Righteousness, is such, that to shew all the particulars of its several Duties, the necessity of them, the Motives to them, the Means whereby to accomplish them, the Blessings of them, the Danger of the Neglect, and the Impertinency of any Religion or Faith without them; and to answer the Objections, remove the Excuses, shew the odiousness of Sins, the madness and folly of all sorts of them; and the Exhortations, Reproofs, Instructions, Explications, necessary on all those numerous Subjects, would certainly find all the Preachers in the World sufficient Work for their whole Lives, if ten times as long, without meddling with the sublimated Notions of a solitary Faith, which does not belong to us in our Station: A Faith without good Works! away with it: *St. James* says 'tis dead, and then it's fit only to be buried, from annoying us with its favour. And so I have done with it for this time. And thus I have finished the first Branch of my Discourse, about the true Notion of saving Faith; which

which I must yet be forced to say more on, when I come to Answer the *Calvinian* Objections.

## SECT. II.

*Of the true Notion of saving Repentance, and particularly concerning that pretence of the Death-Bed one.*

**I** Come now to consider the mistakes about the true Notion of saving Repentance; which mistakes tend to the same mischief with those about Faith; that is, giving hopes of Heaven in a bad Life; which is effectually done by setting up an entire Defeazance in the Moral Law, as Mr. *Asgil* a Lawyer writes. *The Moral Law* (says he) *hath in it self a Defeazance or Condition annexed to it, at the time of the first delivering of it, except ye Repent, ye shall Perish: By which this Law may be fulfill'd without a performance of it in Specie, by doing another thing which is admitted to be done instead of it—And thus Repentance, which is not a performance of the Moral Law, is nevertheless accepted instead of it.* It cannot but grieve any pious heart to see the Religion of the holy and ever blessed Jesus, thus made in earnest, what malicious Infidels of old objected to it, *Sceleris Sanctuarium*, a Sanctuary and Refuge of all Villainy: For who cannot excuse himself in himself, the highest crimes of a most vicious Life, upon such Principles as these? Suppose him never so wicked; and that after Baptism, and under profession of Christianity: 'Tis but at last being sorry he did so; and who dares deny him Heaven and Salvation? The very Heathens generally had no such impudent evasion to take off the horror of Immortality. By this means the Kingdom of Christ must be made subserviant to the Kingdom of Darkness: Christ's Kingdom here is in our hearts, to Rule and Reign in our Lives by his holy Spirit,



Spirit, bringing us to all Virtue, Godliness, and Honesty, but Satan's usurp'd Kingdom is in the hearts of the Wicked, leading them to all Iniquity: *For his Servants ye are, to whom ye Obey, whether of Sin unto Death, or of Obedience unto Righteousness*, Rom. 6. 16. But by this Patronage of Iniquity, set up by these Principles of solitary Faith, and fruitless Repentance, pinn'd upon Christ as their Author, he must then by clear consequence be made to support those very Works of Sin, which he came to destroy: *The Devil sinneth from the beginning* (saith St. John) *and for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the Works of the Devil.* 1 John 3. 8. But what can support or encourage the practice of Sin more, than this sort of Doctrine about Repentance.

II. That there is a Repentance allow'd and set forth by Christianity, is one of the main Articles, nay, and prime Privileges of the Gospel; but not such a Repentance as supersedes the necessity of a Righteous Life in the Gospellers, but the quite contrary, *Repentance from dead Works to serve the living God*, Heb. 6. 1. Heb. 9. 14. and how must we serve him? *by denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and living Soberly, Righteously and Godly in this present World*, Tit. 2. 12. *by doing Righteousness even as he is Righteous*, 1 John 3. 7. *by Obedience to his Precepts.* Can there be any serving him, without keeping his Commandments? unless you would serve him treacherously: So that it is utterly false, and most perniciously false; that there is, or can be, any *Defenzance* in, or for the Moral Law: But only there is a merciful respite of time God is pleased to allow Sinners to come to Repentance in, still inviting them, with intreaties and long sufferance; and suspending the execution of his Judgments; mean while, *I gave her space to Repent, but she Repented not*, Rev. 2. 21. Which space none knows how long or short it may be to each of themselves in particular. But whenever true Repentance comes, its main business is in doing Gospel Duties and the Duties of the Moral Law, & practising all rules of good Life contain'd in that Law;

## fully consider it.

Law ; which Christ declares to us, *he came not to do, but to fulfil*, Mat. 5. 17. where he also threatens t  
that break it, and Rewards them that do, and te in  
it.

III. The first that would have turn'd the Moral Law out of Doors were the *Antinomians* ; and how successful such Doctrines have been in propagating Immorality in the World, is sadly visibly at this Day. And 'tis lamentable to consider that the true Notion of saving Repentance has been so generally blinded from People in this Age by such Teachers ; that if a Man speak but Truth of it, he shall have almost as many Adversaries as Hearers : One crys out, you cut off all late Penitents, that have not time to live a good Life, from hopes in the Gospel of Salvation : Another crys, you'll make such People that have lived Wicked Lives despair on their Death-Bed : Another crys, 'tis Uncharitable, Censorious, robs Sinners of God's mercy, terrifies People from the Church, and makes a dying Repentance usefess. All these Objections, or rather Clamours, we labour under, in telling Truths that are uneasy to Flesh and Blood. I know the difficulty of my Task, and the prejudice this Discourse, must be liable to, if I handle it throughly ; and yet if I do not, but dispatch the nature of true Repentance only with, some brief Descriptions and general Definitions : I shall lie open still to these same Objections as often as any Caviller pleases. I think it best therefore (notwithstanding the invidiousness of the subject to some) to go throw with it once for all (so far as my intended brevity will admit) to clear the matter in hand, and fully to overthrow the false Notion of saving Repentance.

IV. The Root and Bottom of Peoples being so averse to the true Notion of *saving Repentance*, and so fond of the false Notion, is this, that they find they live ill Lives themselves ; and that it's like they will continue so to do, and therefore they would have a *Plank* after Shipwreck to catch at when they are sinking ; that is, when they are Dying ; and tho' they

are not in that case at present, they are zealous to support the hopes of the worst and most immoral dying People, if they express Repentance then ; because it may come to be their own turn at last. Now if I can take away those hopes at last, I spoil all the Divinity of these easie Gentlemen ; and I am sure that would be worth the while of any one that values Religion or Vertue, and the success of Christianity upon Earth. I therefore affirm, that is it impossible, that any meer *Death-Bed Repentance* can be effectual to the Salvation of any wicked Liver among Christians. And here I must caution, that by being effectual to Salvation, I mean not that any Repentance can be an efficient cause of Salvation ; but I mean the performance of such a condition as God will effectually accept of thro' his mercy, so as to grant us Salvation in Christ according to the Promises of the Gospel. And so I would be understood in every place where I use those Words, *effectual to Salvation*, for brevity sake. This I thought necessary to premise to prevent cavils or misunderstanding. And now that no meer *Death-Bed Repentance* can be thus effectual to the Salvation of any wicked Livers among Christians, I doubt not to maintain beyond any reasonable Contradiction. I am sure we cannot shew one in all the Histories of the Bible, nor of the World, that having lived a wicked Life in the profession of Christianity, we can prove to have been Saved on a bare *Death-Bed Repentance*.

V. As for the Thief on the Cross, it is no instance here, he comes not under my Case ; he was none of those that lived an evil Life under the profession of Christianity : He was no Christian before, whilst he lived ill. All that can be urg'd, is, that it seems hard, Infidels should have better terms than Christians. I Answer, it is not hard, if they never had Christianity sufficiently proposed. Who would you be severest upon for wounding your self, and murdering your Children, a Stranger and professed Enemy, or a treacherous domestick Servant, your own Creature, raised up to be your Bosom Friend ? *If he that despised*  
Moles's

## The Death-Bed Repentance 25

Moses's Law says the Apostle, *dy'd without Mercy*, of how much sorer Punishment shall the Despisers of Christ's be Law worthy? For there is a *νόμος πίστεως*, a Law of Faith also; the living contrary to which, in *Sinning wilfully after the receiving the Knowledge of the Truth*, Heb. 10. 26, is call'd in the 29th verse, *Treading under Foot the Son of God*; counting the Blood of the Covenant, an unholy Thing, and doing despite to the Spirit of Grace. Now that this is a very Desperate case, and utterly hopeless, when People are past the time to live vertuously, (as the time of Death-Bed, or Death's last Sickness always is) I hope to make very plain before I have done. And if I did not pitch upon this mentioned season of Death-Bed particularly, I could never expect otherwise to cut off the Root of the false Hopes, which in most of sensual People will always extend it self to the last cast. If a sort of Repentance, without performance of good Life, be the thing to be accepted of by God, then the conclusion of Life, on our Death-Bed, or last Period, is the chief thing to be regarded, and the whole will lie upon that; as indeed such Believers generally leave the issue there, which if they were sure before-hand would fail them, perhaps some of them would beware, and think it reasonable to get better Hopes to trust to, which must be grounded on better Principles, and better Practices.

VI. I come now to prove my Proposition, that no meer *Death-Bed Repentance*, can be effectual to the Salvation of any wicked Liver among Christians: Which I shall evidence by shewing,

*First*, That the Death-Bed is usually the certain time of the final Reprobation of wicked Livers, if not utterly Reprobated before, and consequently that there's no room left for saving Repentance then, because the time of their Reprobation is then come.

*Secondly*, I shall evidence it from the nature of true saving Repentance, and the impossibility of a Death-Bed Capacity to perform it.

*Thirdly*,

*Thirdly*, I shall evidence it from the whole Tenure of the Covenant of Grace, and from all the Scripture Promises and Threats, as to Salvation and Damnation.

To begin with the *First*, I produce that Scripture, Prov. 1. 28. *Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer, they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me*, Which is a dreadful Declaration of God's resolving at last to forsake and cast off all persevering Sinners; and shews plainly, that there is a time, when God will at last no longer suffer his Mercy to be abused, nor grant his Salvation to those that have frustrated all his Methods for their Reformation: And that they who have long mock'd God, by pretending Christianity, without obeying it; God will at last mock them, as the 26th Verse says, *I also will Laugh at your Calamities; I will Mock when your Fear cometh*. ver. 27. *When your Fear cometh as desolation, and your Destruction cometh as a Whirlwind; when Distress and Anguish cometh upon you; then says the 28th Verse, They shall call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me*: We must consider that there is a time respectively limited and assigned for Sinners to Repent in; *I gave her space to Repent, but she repented not, forsake her*. There is a day of Grace, which People may Sin away, and have it no more allow'd them, that is after a long perseverance in wicked Courses, God may, and does at last give such over to a state of Reprobation; that is, a Rejection from God's Grace; which happens to wicked People sometimes (tho' rarely so) a long time, perhaps before they Die; but always before Excision or Death, as it did to *Pharaoh*, who is said to have *harden'd his own heart still*, Exod. 8. 15. 32. and chap. 9. 34. But after the seventh Miracle, reckoning so many more than the Magicians could do, 'tis at last said, *that God harden'd his Heart*, Chap. 10. 27. To be harden'd of God, is to be Reprobated and Rejected of God; and there are doubtless more of such Reprobates than People generally imagine. We read in Rom. 1. 18. of some that held

the



*the Truth in Unrighteousness, and the 18th Verse tells us, that God give them over to a Reprobate mind. And 2 Tim. 3. 8. that some were Reprobates concerning the Faith, and those were Men of corrupt minds, says the words before it : For otherwise, the Spirit of God dwelleth in some measure in all baptized Christians till they be Reprobated, as 1 Cor. 3. 16. Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you, and Chap. 6. 19. What, know ye not that your Body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you; and 2 Cor. 13. 5. Know ye not how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be Reprobates. The Scripture tells us of a certain measure of Iniquity, which People do fulfil before they be Reprobated, as our Saviour said to the wicked Jews, fill ye up the measure of your Iniquities, Mat. 23. 32. And to them that have done so among Christians, may be apply'd, what the Apostle speaks, Heb. 6. 4. 5. 6. It is impossible for those who were once enlighten'd, and have tasted the Heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come, if they fall away, (that is to final Reprobation) to renew them again unto Repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame : And again, Heb. 10. 26, 27. For if we Sin wilfully (that is, continue in wilful Sinning unto Reprobation) after we have received the Knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sin, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which will devour the Adversaries. This I take to be the most natural Sense, the words will easily bear in both these places : Now because all that sits us, either for Salvation or Damnation, is transacted in this Life, and consequently none are Reprobated after Death ; therefore it must be sometime before their Death, and so at the latest for certain, it must be on their Death-Bed, or last Sickness, for if it be not then, it will never be. And thus I argue, all wicked Livers that continue in an evil Life, till Death comes to put an End to Life, have grieved and resisted the holy Spirit of God perseveringly and finally ; but they that do so, God will*

## 28 The Death-Bed Repentance

will Forake and Reprobate them (witness the first Text named on this Head. *Prov. 1. 28.* and all the other Scriptures I have produced.) Therefore they that do so, cannot possibly have saving Repentance at their Death; for it's impossible for Reprobates to have true saving Repentance; a great sorrow they may, as all that see themselves about dropping into Hell, may well have. And that such are Reprobates, who, have finally persevered and continued wicked (till their Death, or Death's last Sickness, that is, as long as they could) cannot be denied with any colour of Reason; for this is the general Rule to know Reprobates by, or what Reprobates mean in any intelligible way; the Scripture gives us no other.

Now if, after all I have offer'd, the Notions on this Head should yet happen not to be so clear to every one's Judgment, the two following Heads will make amends, as to the proving fully the main Proposition, that no meer *Death-Bed Repentance* can be effectual to the Salvation of any wicked Liver among Christians.

VII. Which I am to evidence in the second place.

*Secondly*, From the nature of true saving Repentance, and the impossibility of a Death-Bed Capacity to perform it.

To make this plain, we must consider that there are two sorts of saving Repentance: *First*, Baptismal Repentance requisite before Baptism; and *Secondly*, Repentance of Christians already baptized, or Repentance after Lapse, or after falling from our Baptismal Vow; and these two are vastly different. And here I must own I was to my great Satisfaction confirm'd in this by no less a Man than the Pious and Reverend Dr. William Sherlock, in his *Practical Considerations on Death*. I perfectly remember his Notion concurs with me in this distinction. These two sorts of Repentance, I say, are vastly different: For,

*First*, *Baptismal Repentance*, or Repentance sufficient for Baptism, requires no more than a hearty sorrow for Sin, and a sincere present Resolution utterly to forsake it, absolutely intending to live a good Life hereafter

hereafter through Faith in Christ : ' This is all that is requisite to Baptism, and whatsoever *Infidel, Jew, Turk or Heathen*, has this degree of Repentance, and receives Baptism, he is certainly saved if he die that Instant after, tho' he had been the wickedest Liver in the World before. But still I must be suppos'd to speak of those that never rejected Christianity, and the Duties propos'd by it ; of which Duties, the first after believing, is being baptized with the *Baptism of Repentance for the Remission of Sins*, with Water-Baptism, as the Gospel of Christ requires. Far be it from me to mean that the neglecters of Christianity, after it had been sufficiently propos'd to them, should be so benefitted as to be sav'd by the bare Baptism at their Death, which they refus'd all their Life. So that here I allow a Death-Bed Repentance to be saving in this case, when Baptism is administer'd to one that was no Christian during his ill Life: But this is far different from the case of wicked Livers among Christians, the benefit of their first Baptismal Washing is lost by their sinning it away after, and Baptism can never be repealed: But at the first receiving it, with the Conditions requisite, it certainly washes away all Sin, and sometimes even the Faith in Christ alone has been thought equivalent to Baptism ; and the Primitive Church always allow'd hopes of Salvation to eminent Believers, tho' they mist the Sacrament of Baptism ; when it was not by their own default, but that they earnestly desired it ; as at this Day we believe that the efficacy of the other Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, will be allow'd to them that cannot come by the outward Elements, if they be fitly prepared and earnestly desire it : This is the extraordinary way ; and upon this ground it is believed, that the Salvation of the Thief on the Cross was granted him, without Baptism, because he could not then come by it : So the Primitive Christians did believe also that Martyrdom for Christ, was equivalent to Baptism, when that Sacramental Water could not be had, but to be sure, Baptism certainly compleats the Salvation of any one

one whosoever, that has been ever so wicked, if he has but that degree of Repentance I now named, with believing in Christ, and this Baptifmal Repentance is the thing which is meant by *the Baptifmal Repentance for the Remiffion of Sins*, so often named in Scripture; and it is to this Sence, that all those Scriptures relate, which seem to make faving Repentance terminate in a Sorrow for Sin, and Refolution of Amendment; that can mean no other than Baptifmal Repentance.

But *Secondly*, Repentance after Lapse, or after falling from our Baptifmal Vow, is quite of another degree, as belonging to another state of Life, and to circumstances infinitely different. Before Baptifm, Men were Heathens; and what they did was in Darkness and Ignorance: But Christ, that came to call us out of *Darkness into his marvelous Light*, will expect we should after walk as *the Children of Light*, Eph. 5. 8. *If I had not come*, fays Christ, *they had no Sin* (that is, none comparitively) *but now they have no cloak for their Sin*, John 15. 22. Therefore, now, if we Sin after our Baptifmal Covenant, God in his Mercy, it's true, allows us a Repentance of Reconciliation again; but it must be far another sort of Repentance than what would have served us for Baptifm. No Sorrow, no Refolution, will suffice now; but we must work a great Work for it: We are fallen from a state of Glory now, after being Christians; and we must be renewed again before we can be partakers of that state again, which leads to Glory; that is, we must tread back our wrong steps again, and live the right Life required of us; or else all our poor Peccavi's will be (as to our Salvation) in the ears of God, but as the howling of *Moab*, *Isaiah* 15. 2. or the groaning of *Beasts*, *Joel* 1. 18. Saving Repentance then, after Lapse among grown Christians, can be nothing else but a new Life, called *Regeneration or the new Creature*. If we have lived a wrong Life, we must live a right Life again, before it can be a Repentance to Salvation. *Godly sorrow 'tis true*, begins it, or disposes us towards it; but is not the thing it self: Sorrow is but a *Passion*; but  
true

true saving Repentance is an *action*, and a continued series of actions in all the moral Duties of a good Life. Sorrow is nothing without this; nor all the other notions of Repentance: For there is a Repentance not unto Salvation; *Judas Repented*, Mat. 27. 3. but it was not to Salvation; yet it caus'd both Sorrow and Restitution too: *He repented and brought again the Thirty Pieces of Silver*; and no doubt he had as deep a sorrow as might be; for it was even great enough to distract him; so, that he made away himself thereupon, *μετανοειν*, which is the Word for Repentance, signifying a true change of Mind. Some are apt to believe, such a change will be accepted of God, when there is not time to do Works accordingly. But I say, there can be no such true Change, at such a time after Lapse, when Death overtakes them, they consider not.

*First*, That a Hypocritical Change may seem as great and real, as a true Change, even to the Sinner himself, when his Terror and Consternation is on him.

*Secondly*, That no such Change can be true, lasting and sincere in an habitual wicked Christian, that has continued wicked till his Death-sickness: For it is God only, can see the sincerity; and we should conclude that if God saw that Change sincere, he would have given him time to perform his Work, that so the Man might be Intituled to mercy according to the Terms of Salvation, given us by his express reveal'd Will in the Gospel; which being no other for baptized Christians, than a good Life. The believing that God will exempt any particular Christians from this Condition, and save them without it (especially, when we know not who nor how many those may be) will take away the absolute necessity of a good Life to Salvation; and consequently the necessity of any one's complying thoroughly with that condition: For tho' the danger may be urg'd in another way. Yet danger (tho' very great) does not lay an absolute necessity to go out of that way; for many do venture through Dangers, and escape well enough.

*Thirdly*,



*Thirdly*, That it is absolutely false, that God can have any *Secret Will* to contradict his reveal'd Will: For that would be giving himself the lie. We must therefore conclude, that God's cutting off a Sinner in the midst of his Sins (let the sorrow mean while seem what it will) is but the execution of God's final Sentence of Reprobation; which in such cases is most usually done by excision.

And this is no stinting of the Mercy of God; for we have no way to expect his Mercy, but according to his own Declaration of it, nor to judge whom he shews Mercy to, but by his own Acts: And if he had given such a Sinner Mercy he would have given him time to Work out his Salvation; which because he did not, we must not believe it possible, that there can be such a Notion of his Mercy, as destroys both his Justice, and his Truth by a secret Will, so contrary to all his reveal'd Will in the Scripture; nor can the greatness of the Sinner's Sorrow, give us ground for other Thoughts. *Judas* his sorrow, was perhaps as great as any; therefore it is not a sorrow for Sin, tho' never so great Sorrow, that is, the true Repentance to Salvation among grown Christians, as People generally take it to be; but a timely forsaking Sin, so as to live a good Life: Timely, I say, because upon the upshot, our good Life, must (at least in God's merciful account on estimate) over-balance our bad Life, and unravil it all again, and make Restitution, Satisfaction and Amends to our uttermost ability for every thing amiss. So the Scripture describes the true Repentance, *Ezek. 33. 14, 15.* and does not take the least notice of Sorrow or Resolution in the case; but says, *if the wicked turns from his Sin, and doth that which is Lawful and Right, if he restore the Pledge, give again that he hath Rob'd, walk in the Statutes of Life, without committing Iniquity, he shall surely live, he shall not die, he hath done that which is Lawful and Right, he shall surely live, and in his Righteousness that he hath done he shall live,* says the 18th Chap. speaking of the same thing in the 21 and 22 Verses; *But if the wicked will*

will turn from all his Sins that he hath committed, and keep all my Statutes, and do that which is Lawful and Right, he shall surely live, he shall not die; all his Transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him, in his Righteousness that he hath done he shall live. So, that by this Scripture the true Repentance to Salvation, is nothing else, but a future living a good Life, a clear thorow Change of Nature; a thorow Change both of Mind and Manners: Such a Change, as to get a habit or true custom of all Vertue; and that done so timely, as that it may be said upon the upshot at last, that they have lived a good Life. There is no Salvation for any other. that after Baptism have lived viciously: 'Tis nothing but a good Life can save us thro' Christ; and Repentance to Salvation, can be no other than that which brings us actually into such a good Life, and confirm us in it: And till that good Life be wrought in us, and by us, and brought to a true habit and thorow Change, it is not the true Repentance to Salvation.

And now, let us consider the impossibility of a Death-Bed Capacity for this Performance.

1. True Repentance must make Restitution and Satisfaction for all Injuries, to our utmost Power, *Restore the Pledge, give again that he hath Rob'd.*

2. It must Root out all evil Habits, Change our whole Nature: and,

3. It must acquire *Habits* of all Vertue, which is as difficult a long *Task* and *Trade* as can be learn'd.

4. It must *finish a good Course, fight a good Fight*, and make us People of good Lives.

5. It must exercise the Graces of Faith, Hope, and Self-denial.

6. It must set a good Example of good Life to others, whom our ill Example had Infected. All these are impossible for a Death-Bed Capacity to perform, as might be largely shewn in each particular; but that I am in haste to go forward. Alas, the Task of true saving Repentance, is great enough for the most vigorous part of our Life, and is a Burthen exceeding hea-

vy, if not too difficult, for infirm old Age, much more for the Death-Bed. To remove the force of Habits; to alter the bent of Nature, will be as hard to a Man on his Death-Bed, as to take a Mountain on his Back and carry it into the Sea. True and saving Repentance after a wicked Life in Christianity is a great Work, and a long Journey, call'd in Scripture, *a Labour, a Race, a Warfare*: And can any one be said, to have perform'd a long Journey, that died before he hath well begun it, or perhaps, never went a Mile of it. True Repentance must make the Whoremonger Chaste, the Quarreller or Dueller Peaceable, the Glutton Temperate, the Drunkard Sober. And is it not ridiculous to say, that such a Man on his Death-Bed, is grown very Chaste, very Temperate, very Sober, very free from Killing or Fighting his Neighbours. A pure pretended change of Life indeed, which came of necessity upon him, by his Fate, before it came of Choice. This is one of Satan's *Slurs or Delusions* put upon poor Sinners; who as he has deceived them into Sin all their Lives, so he prosecutes the same Game of deluding them at their Death; by making them believe after all their Wickedness, they are going to Heaven with a miserable poor Peccavi, because forsooth, they are sorry for what's past. And so are all (I say) that ever were in their condition; and if that would *save People*, there would in a manner no Body be Damn'd, that had but time to think before they Dy'd.

VIII. And so I come now to prove, that no *Death-Bed Repentance* can be effectual to the Salvation of any wicked Liver among Christians, from the third ground propos'd; that is, from the whole Tenure of the Covenant of Grace, and from all the Scripture Promises and Threats, as to Salvation and Damnation.

The whole Tenure of the Covenant of Grace, is in the Substance and plain Sence of it, Grace and Mercy offer'd to them that were never so wicked before, upon their Faith and Repentance, upon true Believing, with true changing their Lives to a thorow Goodness or Repentance, according to the description of  
true

true Repentance already told you. And this is called a *Covenant of Grace*, because it is the *gracious Mercy of God*, so to offer us this Reconciliation, after our Original Guilt and Condemnation in *Adam*; and also, after our own actual Guilt, which involves us in a worse Condemnation; that notwithstanding our continued Rebellion against God, he offers us still a gracious Reconciliation, if we will yet but change our lives from an ill Life, to a good Life, through Faith in him. This Covenant he offers us in his Son's Blood; a most precious Seal for it; the most stupendious Condescension, and amazingest Love and Goodness, that can be thought of, surpassing all imagination to comprehend *the height and depth of it, and the wonderful Riches of his Grace*. Now, as many as will accept of this Covenant, do enter into a formal Ratification of it by Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper: Baptism, passes the Covenant between God and us, and exhibits the merits of Christ's Blood to us; the Lord's Supper is the further confirmation and continual Renewal of that Sacramental Covenant: And every one knows that a Covenant must have Articles on both sides, we promise through Christ a good Life unto God, and he promises through Christ on those Terms, Salvation to us. Now, shall we think to *break* our part, and *bind* him to his? 'Twere a knavish trick to put upon another, much more upon God. Does not every one vow a good Life in his Baptism? Does he not therefore, owe it to God? And does he not renew the same Vow and Debt in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper? Nay, the very pretending to be a Christian makes an Assumpst of the Debt, assumes the same engagement. Now, where's the Proviso here, that we may do the quite contrary to this all our Life, and come off at our Death with a device of Defeazance against the Moral Law? A Device called a *Death-Bed Repentance*; a Phrase that is a Stranger to Scripture Language. There is not such a Word or any Expression of that import, for lapsed Christians, in all the Bible. The whole Tenure of Scripture is a Retribu-

## 36 The Death-Bed Repentance

tion of good Rewards to good Livers, and evil Rewards to evil Livers : *Therefore says St. Paul, we are Debtors (Rom. 8. 12.) not to the Flesh to live after the Flesh ; for if ye live after the Flesh ye shall die ; but if ye through the Spirit, do mortify the Deeds of the Body, ye shall live.* But this a Death-Bed Capacity cannot perform. Nay, all the Gifts and Graces of the Gospel, Faith, Hope, Charity, Repentance, Miracles, Tongues, Prophecies, do all conspire to this one End, to make us *Fear God, and keep his Commandments ; to make us live Soberly, Righteously and Godly in this present World.* As to the Promises and Threats that relate to Salvation or Damnation, they all imply the same thing. A good Life is the sole Design the Promises Drive at, 2. Cor. 7. 1. *Having therefore these Promises, let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of the Lord ;* and the 2 Pet. 1. 4. *Great and precious Promises, that by these we might be partakers of the Divine Nature, by having escaped the Corruption, that is in the World through Lust.* The Promises of Heaven are to none but good Livers, and the Threats of assured Damnation as positive to all evil Livers, Rom. 2. 9. *Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul of Man that worketh Evil, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile : But Glory, Honour and Peace to every Man that worketh Good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.* Therefore a good Life being the essential part on our side of the whole Tenure of the Covenant of Grace, nothing called by the name of Repentance, or any other name can shuffle it by, nor no sort of Repentance can be accepted of by Christ's Gospel among Christians ; but that which is an actual good Life ; that being the Vow of our Baptism. And that a Death-Bed Capacity cannot perform : Nay, that's the time that Vengeance begins, for all the past neglect of a good Life. 'Tis then God says (in the Words of the Scripture, Prov. 1. 28.) *They shall call upon me, but I will not Answer, they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.* And there are many Parallels to this place in other Scriptures, that God will not hear the most lamentable Sorrow and Cry of them  
that



that have been obstinately wicked Livers, *Isaiah*, 1. 15. *Jer.* 14. 12. and 11. 11. *Micah* 3. 4. and *Ezek.* 8. 18. *Mine Eye shall not spare, neither shall I have pity: And tho' they cry in my Ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them, tho' they make many Prayers, says Isaiah, I will not hear 'em.* Alas! when the Day of Vengeance is come, and Hell gaping for it's Prey; it's too late to begin to prepare for Heaven then.

IX. Now, I think it necessary, to consider, and Answer the chief Objections that may be brought against this Doctrine. There are a sort of People, who not being engaged in the practice of universal Iniquity, nor perhaps, in the extreams of any one sort of Iniquity, do think their Condition well enough; and would by no means have the Terms of Salvation understood of an universal Obedience, in all Works of Gospel Righteousness: This is too severe, say they, and would confine Salvation, but to a few comparatively.

One says to himself, I deal justly with my Neighbours; I neither Murder, Rob, nor Steal; and do a great many good things; but I have my Infirmary it's true; and who has not some: I am overcome with Temptations to Lust, and now and then commit Fornication, or the like; I am sure God will not be so unmerciful as to Damn me for this one thing. Another says, I commit no Adultery, nor Fornication, nor other great Sins; but one Infirmary overcomes me, that is, good Company; and other motives, force me to be Drunk sometimes: And sure God is more merciful than to Damn me for this one thing. Another says, I neither practice intemperate Drinking, nor Fornication, nor other great Sins; but my Necessities force me to practice a little Injustice, False-dealings, or Cheats, now and then; that I may be able to keep ballance with my Neighbours in my Station, and to live in the fashion of the World like others: And sure, the Almighty has more mercy than to Damn me for this. And for what purpose, thinks each of them did Christ come at all, but mercifully to Save People in these Circumstances, and pay the

## 38 The Death-Bed Repentance

Reckoning for them by his Merits, if they comply with his Church-Ordinance; and so they cannot believe, that undispenfable univerfal Obedience to the Gospel Precepts fhould be the design of Chriftianity; leaft it fhould feem to impofe a Duty on poor frail Mortals, which would be generally impracticable. Thus having put this Objection in its full Strength, I fhall now Answer it.

But firft, I premife this one *Objection*, That at fuch rate of Arguing, any one may Excufe himfelf, whilft he continues in that Sin he delights moft in; and only avoids thofe Sins that he has lefs Inclination to; and fo no body need be honeft for Confcience fake, if he can but act his Sins difcreetly enough, to avoid hurting himfelf in this World, and truly that would make but a very odd fort of Religion.

But to the Answer, I confeß there are but few comparatively who attain Salvation; that is moft certainly true, *Matth. 7. 13. Luke 13. 24.* but this fhould make each of us ftrove to be of the Number of thofe few, and that we can never otherwife be, than by fincere cordial Obedience to Chrift, in a Life (foon or later) of univerfal Chriftian Honesty; *partial Obedience* will not do, that's but being, *almost a Chriftian*. Is he an honeft Servant that will only obey your juft Commands in what himfelf pleafes? But in other as juft and good Commands will abfolutely Difobey, and do quite contrary, and affront your Authority; and even fly in your Face; and yet fhall impudently rely on your Goodnefs ftill, not to punifh him, nor difcharge him your Service, notwithstanding you fhould Threaten, and Swear you'll do it, which he'd make but a mock of, and difbelieve you ftill. Now God has fworn, that they who will not obey him, fhall not enter into his Reft. The fame God that has forbidden Murder, and Stealing, has alfo under the fame eternal penalty forbidden Adultery, and Fornication, and likewife Drunkennefs, and Cheating, and all the reft of the Tranfgreffions of our Moral Duties, and difobeying him flatly in one, is an entire Breach of our Obedience;

dience ; and will have the same Construction as if we disobeyed him in all *He that Offendeth in one point, is guilty of all*, says St. James, 2. 10. No Man can be counted an honest Christian that lives in the Transgression of any Christian Moral Duty, tho' licentious People are apt to call such Sins, Infirmities.

X. But we should know rightly, what Infirmities are. All the evil in Nature may be called 'Infirmities in some Sence ; but the meaning of Sins of Infirmity, in Opposition to Sins of Presumption, is, that some Sins are so small, numerous and undiscernable, that none of the Righteousst Livers could ever escape them all ; the highest step of Christian Perfection being more than any Mortal since the Fall (except Christ) could attain to. Every wrong, ill word, or slip of the Tongue, every sudden evil thought and desire, every omitting or coming short of devotional Duty, nay, every defect of perfect unsinning Righteousness are Sins. These are called Sins of Infirmity, because in great measure unavoidable to the very Saints in this life, by reason of the Infirmity of humane Nature in this degenerated lapsed State : Such Sins as these, may, and do surprize every Man ; but Sins of *Presumption*, for distinction sake, are usually called such as Men presumptuously venture knowingly upon, tho' they are so great that they cannot but see and know them to be gross Sins, before they commit them ; they are not so undiscernably small, as to steal upon them before they are perceived ; and are also of such a heinous Nature, that they come under the Transgression of Morality, which our Saviour calls *the weightier Matters of the Law*, and violate the Character of Christian honesty.

XI. What honesty is, in the Christian Sence, the Apostle tells us, 1 Pet. 2. 12. *having our Conversation honest*, is, that by our good Works God might be glorified ; and that we should *abstain from fleshly Lusts, which war against the Soul* : And St. Paul tells us what walking honestly is, Rom. 13. 13. *Let us walk honestly as in the Day, not in Riot and Drunkenness, not in Chambering and Wantonness, not in Strife and Envy ; but put ye on*

## The Death-Bed Repentance

*the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no Provision for the Flesh to fulfil the Lusts thereof.* This is the true Christian honesty; and the Breach of this must not be called *Infirmity*; but dishonesty towards God, Knavery, Perfidiousness, and Villiany towards Christ, who came not to procure us impunity for Wickedness of any sort whatsoever, or to excuse the practice of it; but the quite contrary, to rescue us out of all such practices by his Precepts, by his Example, by his Promises, by his Threatnings, by his holy Spirit, and by the Pardon obtain'd for us thro' his Death and Passion, on that only Condition that we obey him sincerely in the weightier Matters of the Law; that is, in Christian honesty, universally, strictly, and indispensably, and endeavour the less weightier Matters too, as well as we can: Then if any Man Sin, tho' by falling into a great Lapse it self, provided it be timely and sincerely, forsaken and amended, by true Repentance, and turning to God, Acts 26. 20. *By doing the Works meet for such Repentance,* (that is, living a contrary good Life) then I say, *We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our Sins.*

XII. And this Duty surely is not impracticable, *His Commandments are not grievous,* 1 John 5. 3. And the practice and lives of many in all Ages have proved, (and God be thanked, even in this worst Age, do still prove) that this Christian Duty is feasible; nay, and easier (when we are once habituated to it) than the contrary. What? can't we be Sober, Just, and Chaste, with the help of all the Remedies God has given us against Sin? Can't we be honest Men in spite of the Devil? If we cannot, we are in an ill case; and it shows too evidently whose Children we are. *He that committeth Sin is of the Devil, for the Devil sinneth from the Beginning,* 1 John 3. 8. and says the 10th Verse, *in this the Children of God are manifest, and the Children of the Devil; he that doth not Righteousness, is not of God.* Where Righteousness is to be taken in this plain Sense of our honest Christian Duty, not in the Sense of Perfect, Sinless, spotless Righteousness, such as was required

quired of *Adam* in the perfect state of Innocence: For in that Sence, 'tis certain, as the Scripture says, *there is none Righteous, no not one*, but Christ alone: Yet God is pleas'd to call that imperfect Duty, that universal Honesty, which we are now able to perform through Christ's help, by the general Name of *Righteousness*; and it is the Gospel Righteousness only through Faith in Christ, that shall be accepted as the Condition of our Salvation; and these Righteous, 'tis fully declared are the People that shall go into *Life eternal*, Mat. 25. 46. Now, I think this Objection, is Answer'd sufficiently in all its Parts.

XIII. The *second* Objection, I shall produce against this Doctrine, which thus disallows the efficacy of a *Death-Bed Repentance* to Salvation, is, that plausible one of Uncharitableness. *Judge not, least ye be Judged; and Judge not thy Brother; and who art thou that Judgest another; and Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come.* All these may seem to respect this Matter, but have nothing to do with it at all; for they aim at *rash Judgment*. And indeed, these Passages are often extremely abused, and commonly quoted in Defence of all Wickedness: For evil People would have all others wink at them upon this account; whereas 'tis only rash Judgment is forbidden by these Texts. Now rash Judgments consists in these three Branches, *First*, In things Indifferent, *2dly*, In things Doubtful, *3dly*, In things Hidden, Unrevealed, that have no ground at all.

*First*, In things Indifferent, such as eating Flesh, or eating Herbs, keeping a particular Day to my self, or not keeping it; these and the like were Things that the scrupulous Ignorance of the young Christians in the Apostles days, began to Condemn and Judge one another about; which gave occasion to those Reprehensions of St. Paul, Rom. 14. 1. *Him that is weak in the Faith receive; for one believeth that he may eat all Things: Another who is weak, eateth Herbs; let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not: And let not him that eateth not, Judge him that eateth. Who art thou that Judgest another*



## 42 The Death-Bed Repentance

another Man's Servant: And so about a Day keeping, Verse 10. But why dost thou Judge thy Brother? And why dost thou set at nought thy Brother? And Verse 13. Let us not Judge one another any more. Now we see all this is about some Indifferent trifles, which People shoul not Offend nor Judge one another about, because they may be all vertuouly done or not done: He that eateth, or eateth not, says the 6th Verse, doth it to the Lord; and he that keepeth the day, or not, to the Lord he doth it.

Secondly, The second Branch of rash Judgment, is in Things Doubtful, as if Words or Actions be equally capable of a diverse Construction; one side good, and t'other side bad: Charity obliges us to put the best Construction on them, if plain Reason do not more sway to the other; for he is an uncharitable Man, that will be apt to place evil rather than good Constructions, on another Christian's Words or Deeds, where the thing may appear equally doubtful.

Thirdly, The third Branch of rash Judgment, is, in things hidden, unrevealed, and that have no ground at all: As if I shou'd believe ill Things of my Neighbour, without the least foundation; or judge the Thoughts of his Heart to be Evil (which are hid from me) when I have no ground for it, nor any thing discover'd to me of it, by himself nor by any other. This is rash indeed, and may expose us to the Judgment of Him that see'th our Hearts: For Charity is the Badge of Christianity, and Christians shou'd be the most Charitable of all people, especially towards fellow Christians: And to judge secret things thus, is to judge before the time indeed; which we ought to forbear *untill the Lord come*, who will discover the Secrets of those Hearts we misdoubt: If we have no way to discover them, nor sufficient grounds of suspicion, we ought not to judge ill, but preserve our Christian Charity.

XIV. But now all this has nothing to do with things that are apparent, or things that shew gross scandal, or things that are well proved to us, especially what the Scripture plainly declares, or God reveals to us: As that *the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God:*

That

That without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord : That Whoremongers and Adulterers God will Judge : That as to Murderers, Drunkenness and Revellings, and such like ; they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God ; which St. Paul gives us with so solemn an Attestation, Gal. 5. 21. I tell you before-hand, as I told you in times past, That they which do such things, shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. And again, That all People shall be Rewarded according to their Works. That God has covenanted with us for a good Life. That we are his Workmanship created unto good Works, Eph. 2. 10. That Christ gave himself to that end for us, Titus 2. 14. And that God will not be Cheated : Be not deceived ; God is not Mocked ; for what a Man Soweth that shall he Reap, Gal. 6. 7. Now must not we Judge, that all this is so, and that he who incurs the Gospel Threats, is in the same case the Gospel declares of him, when he continues so all his life, or the final part of his life, till his Death-sickness Arrests him. We have a Judgment of Discretion allow'd us by our Saviour, Luke 12. 57. And why even of your selves Judge ye not that which is Right, says Christ : And 1 Cor. 11. 13. Judge ye, is it comely — And Judge I pray you between Me and my Vineyard, says God, Isai. 5. 3. 1 Cor. 5. 12. — Judge them that are within, not without, 1 Cor. 2. 15. He that is spiritual judgeth all things : We must call things by their right Names ; call Evil, Evil ; and Good, Good ; and all this is so far from Uncharitableness, that it is our necessary Duty : For we shou'd encourage others to follow Wickedness, if we did not give its due Character, where-ever we see it ; and it wou'd discourage Vertue too, if we did not put the greatest Difference that might be, between it and Vice,

XV. And this is the true Sence of those places about Judging, and particularly of that place, 1 Cor. 4. 5. Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come : Judge of nothing that is hidden from us, till the time come that it be revealed. But we are not forbid by that place, nor any of the rest, to judge an ill Thing to be ill ; nor to speak ill of that which ill deserves, if it be

be publickly Scandalous ; for the Lenity of the World in such matters encourages Wickedness. It is the constant Refuge of all ill People to fly presently to those Texts, *Judge not, least ye be Judged,* and speak no Evil of your Neighbour. They can talk like white Angels upon Charity, when they have practised like Black ones upon Iniquity: And doubtless the Devil can pretend to Preach when he will. But this is a false Suggestion tho', that we must be so easy to the Wicked ; for if they had lived in Primitive times, they wou'd not only have their ill Actions Blazon'd but they wou'd be shun'd and abhorr'd like the Plague ; no Christian wou'd Eat nor Drink with them. 'Twas the Apostles Command, *1 Cor. 5. 11. Not to keep company ; if any Man that is call'd a Brother be a Fornicator, or a Drunkard, or an Extortioner, with such an one, no not to Eat ; if he were a Christian Brother.* But he allowed them not to keep the same Distance from *Infidels*, because they were generally so ; and to avoid all such, *we must needs go out of the World,* says he, in the 10th Verse. But now the Christian World is sunk so far into the same Corruption with the Heathen World, that that Discipline is lost ; and now for the same reason, that we may not go out of the World, we are forced to Eat and Drink sometimes with those we shou'd not. But it's certain if People combined more against Vice, to give it its due Character, of odious Epithets, and Vertue its due Praises, it wou'd put a great stop to the Libertinism of the Age ; and the World wou'd not generally have such kind Thoughts for the Wicked, when they are dying, on their *Death-bed Repentance*. And truly since it is but equitable that our Judgement shou'd follow our Conviction and Evidence, and must so whether we will or no ; I cannot see how to avoid judging that Man to be in a desperate Case, when dying at the end of a wicked Life ; whom the Scripture saith so of, and whom the whole Bible gives us not one Word of Promise for ; but the dreadful Prognostick and sentence of Dearth Eternal, *a certain fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation, &c.* And so I have  
done

done with the second Objection, about uncharitable Judging.

XVI. The third Objection may be, that this Doctrine is apt to make People fall into Despair; and that is the Sin against the *Holy Ghost*, say some foolish People: I Answer, that Comment is so false, that I know no Sin at all in *Despair*, properly speaking. To disbelieve the Goodness, Mercy and Promises of God in the Scripture, is *Infidelity*, and not *Despair*; but *Despair* in the true and proper Sense, is a not believing our selves to be Intituled to those Promises, when we know we are not under the condition of them, for all the Promises are conditional, to those only, that being Baptised shall live a good Life: And if any knows he has not, but gone the quite contrary way, he cannot but despair of the Promise then; and how can it be a Sin to judge righteous Judgment of his own Case, and to believe that which Scripture and Reason tells him, that he has no part in the Promise as the case then stands, and consequently that if he die so, he shall be Damn'd. It wou'd be a Sin, indeed, to believe otherwise, it wou'd be the greatest Impudence as well as Nonsense, to look for the Reward, without doing the Work. In this case 'tis a Man's duty to Despair, until he has mended his Life actually and sincerely; if God give him further time. So that there is properly but three sorts of Despair; *First*, The Duty of Despair: *Secondly*, The Punishment of Despair: And *Thirdly*, The Misery or Infirmary of Despair; and none of them are the despairing Man's Sin.

*First*, The Duty of Despair is, that conditional sort of despairing, a despairing of getting Heaven, without performing the Condition required for it: And God keep every Christian in such a Despair still, until it has quickned him to the performing the Condition, and then his Despair will be cured; and if he never perform the Condition, 'tis then incurable; but the Sin lies in the not performing the Condition, not in the Despair.

*Secondly*,

*Secondly*, The *Punishment* of Despair is, when God lays this so heavy on them, as to be a part of their Tor-  
 ture; a wakening of their Conscience, and of the  
 Worm that never dieth: But this is no more a Sin in  
 them, than the Stings of their Conscience, or other  
 Punishments that God lays on them; and he may make  
 this Despair so heavy sometimes as to distract them, as  
 it did *Judas*; and as it does all that make away them-  
 selves upon it: But then that highest Despair is not  
 their Sin; but either part of their Punishment from  
 God, when it happens in such wicked People. Or  
 else,

*Thirdly*, Their Misfortune when it happens in inno-  
 cent People; for there comes a Despair sometimes to  
 innocent People, from no just Cause, but from meer  
 weakness of Understanding, or distemper of Body:  
 This is the *Misery* or *Infirmity* of Despair, which yet  
 may distract People so, as to make themselves Away,  
 and still no willful Sin be in either; for what distra-  
 cted People do, they are not accountable to any Law  
 for; they could not help it, when they were not  
 Themselves, and their Reason was lost. Some 'tis true,  
 have fallen into Despair, by fancying they had com-  
 mitted the unpardonable Sin: And after they were  
 convinced of that Error, have lived a vertuous Life,  
 in much Comfort and Assurance. But I can see no  
 Sin that could be in such Despair whilst they were in  
 it; because the Error of their Judgment forced that  
 Despair upon them whether they would or no: All  
 Sin begins in the election or act of the Will, making  
 a wrong or evil Choice; and I think no Man could  
 chuse but Despair, that believed as they did. When  
 the Fault is in the disbelieving or distrusting the Pro-  
 mises, 'tis *Infidelity*; when in misunderstanding the  
 nature of Sin, or any Scriptures, 'tis *Ignorance*: But  
 Despair is only the deducing a right Consequence nat-  
 ural to such Premisses; which cannot be avoided, the  
 Premisses being granted. There can be no Sin then in  
 the inferring a Conclusion right from its Premisses:  
 But if the Conclusion be then false, the Fault must lie



in the Premises ; and 'tis plain the Fault in this Case, was either *Infidelity* or *Ignorance*. See more of this in the Postscript, at the end of the Book.

And now, how simply have People troubled themselves about the dreadful sinfulness of this Despair, when there is no Sin, that I can see, to be found in it: But suppose it were a deadly Sin, who can help it; if a man that has fill'd up the measure of his Sin, shou'd fall into that at last, must we give the World false Doctrine for fear of that: Is it not better that one shou'd die in Despair, than a thousand perish with Presumption; for so they might, if they saw he were embalm'd for Heaven, with the Doctrine of a *Death-bed Repentance*; every one that knew they were not as bad as he yet, wou'd think themselves safe, till they came to his pass. But it's certain, that to make People now (whilst they have yet time to live) despair utterly of any Salvation by such *Death-Bed Repentance*, is the way to prevent the danger of that incurable Despair then; by setting them upon a true Repentance in time, which will remove the Cause; and that's the only way both to cure and prevent a Distemper. I suppose there is no *Death-Bed Sinner* Reads this now; and if any others that do Read me will yet, in spite of all that's said, trust to that broken Reed a *Death-Bed Repentance*; is it any pity, they shou'd Despair then? Do they expect to get any comfort from me? No, let them seek for false Prophets, that cry *Peace, Peace, where there is no Peace*. That *prophecy smooth Things, that prophecy Deceits*. *Isai. 30. 10.* They'll get one at every *Mass-house*, that will save 'em in *Articulo Mortis*. For my part, in the Phrase of Scripture, *I call Heaven and Earth to Witness against them this Day*, that they shall utterly Perish then, when they come to that pass: And then it is, that God says, *They shall call upon Me, but I will not Answer, they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me*: This must certainly be true sometime; and when shou'd it be so likely to be true, as when People are at the very last cast and conclusion of a wicked Life? If it be not true then, it will never be true.

XVII. The *Fourth* Objection may be, what the *Mass-house* late mentioned has minded me of ; that this Doctrine proposed is a hard thing, which might make People go over to the *Popish* Church at their Death, where they may have better hopes. I Answer, Sinking People may catch at Straws, but it will do them no good: Neither will it do our Church any hurt to be rid of such hopelesse, rotten Members : All the reason we wou'd have any to be of our Church, is, that they may be taught right to live good Lives ; and that use is past when Death's come. We can't preach lies to keep such People from worshipping the *Popish* Beast at their Death, who have worshipped *Bacchus*, and *Venus*, and *Mammon* all their Lives ; we are none of Death's Priests, to watch for the Carcase ; and then pretend for a Cow, or a Horse, or a piece of Money, or for your old Cloaths it self (if no better can be had) to send your Souls to Heaven, with some easie Ceremonies ; and to fright away all the Devils, mean while with abundance of Exorcisms, Charms, and Latin-Gibbish ; for you must know the Devil is as much afraid of Latin as of Holy-Water.

Now when some very wicked dying Sinners, are thus harras'd with Despair, they may, after they have lost their Wits cast themselves for Cure upon such promising Mountebancks in Divinity, if they will, we can't help it.

XVIII. The *Fifth* Objection may be, that God may accept the Will for the Deed, and that if the truly sorrowful *Death-Bed* Penitents had time to do the work of a good Life, they wou'd ; and that it is hard God shou'd damn those that did not do a thing only, because he did not give them time to do it. I Answer, That God shall take the Will for the Deed, as to the condition of our Salvation after Lapse, is absolutely false ; he has every where told us the quite contrary, that the Deed and Work is the thing he looks for, and the thing he covenants for : Wou'd ye not count it most Nonsensical your selves, that your Servants shou'd expect the contracted Reward, without ever doing the Work Covenanted

venanted for? And if they only tell you at the end of their time, they are sorry they did not do their Work; but if they were to begin again, they wou'd do it; and you must take this Will for the Deed. Wou'd you count them very good Servants then, and pay them then all you had formerly Covenanted for? Wou'd you not rather count it a ridiculous Cheat, to be so knaved out of your Expectation? As to their Intention of good Life after, if they had time; they cannot say but they had time enough past for it: And when any one has mispent his Life, God is not to be Challenged, for not giving them another Life, or not enlarging the time he allotted them: All that are in Hell may say the same, that if God wou'd give them Life again, O what fine things wou'd they do, like every Prodigal that has Rioted away his Fortune; if he had but such another Estate again, O what a good Husband he'd be; but this is the Fools Repentance, that always comes when it's too late.

XIX. This Device of supposing that God shou'd accept the Will for the Deed, seems at first sight, to make for the Glory of his Mercy; and is pretended to be a Prerogative that God may use in his sovereign Power. Let Men strain the Prerogatives of mortal Kings as high as they please, even to the breaking of their Coronation Oaths, if they will: Yet let God be true, and every Man a Lier. God cannot have any such Prerogative as may falsify or contradict his revealed Will in Scripture. If the Almighty intended the Salvation of any wicked Christian at his Death-Bed Sicknefs, he can by his Prerogative give him a further Life, and time to come into the Terms of Salvation the right way, by living a good Life, and thereby working out his Salvation; but to take him to Heaven without that, is as impossible to God, as it wou'd be for him to Lie, or to make two Contradictions to be true at once, *The unrighteous*, says God, *shall not Inherit the Kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. 6. 9. And, *be not deceived, neither Fornicators—nor Covetous—nor Drunkards—nor Extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God. Without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord*, Heb. 12, 14. And it is plainly told us by him, as his express

**Covenant and Declaration about Repentance,** That the Righteousness of the Righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his Transgression, Ezek. 33. 12. And in the 13th Verse. *When I shall say to the Righteous that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own Righteousness, and commit Iniquity: All his Righteousness shall not be remembered, for his Iniquity that he hath committed he shall die for it.* And the same thrice over in the 18th Chap. 24. and 26. verses, now all this must be true: Therefore God can't falsify it to any Man, by any Prerogative: And as for the Glory of his Mercy, that wou'd be sufficiently glorified 'tother way, of giving longer Life to live well in. But to think of God's saving him without that, wou'd be too low and dishonourable thoughts of God's Mercy; which must in effect destroy his Truth and Justice; It wou'd rather be a stain and dishonour to the Divine Purity, to think that debauch'd wicked Christians (if such may be call'd Christians) who live like Swine wallowing in the Mire of their Sins, shou'd on a little Impotent Death-Bed groaning, be snatch'd into Heaven, into that seat of Purity and Blessedness, as fit Associates for the Holy Jesus; who is a lover of Righteousness, and hateth Iniquity, and who has told us himself, that his Answer will be, *Depart from me you workers of Iniquity.* Therefore, *Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from Iniquity; be not deceived, God is not mocked; what a Man Soweth that shall he Reap.* Let no body think without living Soberly, Righteously and Godly in this present World, to impose upon God, and cheat him with the *Will for the Deed*, which God cannot accept of from any wicked Christians, without falsifying all his Reveal'd will and Covenants.

It may be here objected, that God's not executing his Sentence against Criminals, can be no breach of Promise to them, because they can claim no Right to that Promise, as receiving no Prejudice by the non-performance of it, but it is to their Benefits, and an act of Grace to rescin'd it.

I Answer, That is true, so far as it may be reconcilable with God's Justice as in case of their timely Reformation,

Reformation, as that of *Nineveh* was ; but that cannot be in a final wickedness continued till Death's stroke is upon them, which wou'd rather than come under that Allusion of the Poet,

*Idcirco Stolidam præbet tibi vellere barbam,*

Jupiter ?

This Thought or Expression might besit a Heathen Idol *Jupiter*: But let us consider, whether our God will suffer himself to be affronted ; by wicked Christians all their Life long, with impunity after Death. If it wou'd not be an Injury to the Guilty, or a breach of the Criminals Right to endure that obstinate Wickedness so as to remit the due Punishment of it ; yet it wou'd be an Injury to Christianity it self, and to all Christians, whom the believing the possibility of such a thing, wou'd induce to venture on the Presumption of the like Escape : We know, how many venture Capital Crimes, in hopes of the King's Pardon by his Prerogative, and the same hopes will be infinitely more often made use of here, because the Temptations to pleasant Sins are stronger and infinitely more frequent than to Capital Transgressions of human Princes Laws ; and God is infinitely more Merciful and Gracious than any King. But here lies the difference, earthly Kings cannot pardon Capital Malefactors, without breaking the Rules of their own Laws ; and which sometimes 'tis equitable to break, by reason either of the defect of them in some Cases, or the *duress* of them or the *erroneous proceedings* in some Cases, which no human Laws can in all particular Cases escape, tho' the most perfect for general use that can be made by the wit of Man : And to interpose in such equitable Cases, and rescin'd or break the Laws Sentence, is the thing that Kings call their Prerogative (tho' sometimes they use it without such true Equity, they being themselves the Judge of such Equity) but still they are thereby forced to break the common course of their own Laws : Whereas God's Laws have no possible Defect, Duress, nor Error ; and he can use his Prerogative without breaking the eternal Rules of his own Laws ; by giving the sinner time



to live for such performance of his Laws, as will entitle him Legally to life eternal, according to the merciful Terms and known Rules of the Gospel; that is by a good Life, through faith in Christ. It may be said that if God by his Prerogative give longer Life to a Sinner, then that was not his last Sickness. I answer it might have been his last or Death's-sickness, by the course of Nature, or by the strength of the Distemper, which might be incurable, by any human Means; and yet by the merciful Providence of God, using his Prerogative, the Man may be cured, and raised up for a future good Life; if God sees his Change so sincere that it will certainly produce such a life: And there shou'd be no doubt, but God will in his Mercy and Goodness, then grant it, where the Case is infallibly so, that a true good Life wou'd follow; that so the Sinner might come to Salvation; without which good Life there can be no Salvation for any lapsed Christian: For God is willing that all Men shou'd be saved, 1 Tim. 2. 4. *Who will have all Men to be sav'd*, and he is most passionately desirous of this. *As I live saith they Lord, I have no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his Way and Live*, Ezek. 33. 11. And the 18. Chap. 31. ver. *For why will ye Die, O house of Israel; wherefore turn your selves and live*: The granting further time, therefore in order to the doing of this, on such occasion, is the only proper time, and proper work of God's Prerogative, when he sees it will do; but when he lets them Die without this, 'tis clear, he saw their Change was not such as wou'd sincerely do the work of Salvation, tho they had got further life for it; else he wou'd certainly have given it to them. This you will find further considered Numb. 22. And also where I shall answer the Objections of Mr. Keys's First Book, Sect 3. of this Treatise, Numb. 3. and also at Numb. 6. Concluding this whole Book.

It may be urged that tho a Man cannot do all the Duties or perform all the Vertues of a good Life on his last Sickness, yet 'tis hard to reject him if he does all that he can do. I answer, He will have a mitigation  
of

of his Punishment for that, but not Salvation, *whatsoever good thing any Man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord*, Eph. 6. 8. But the work of Salvation must be done before Salvation can be had by any lapsed Christian; and it is ridiculous to say, that a Work is done, every time that a Man can only say, that he has done what he can do. When a Man has neglected his Work so long, or done so much of the quite contrary, that he has at last run himself into an utter Impossibility, of ever doing it, and then makes some impotent or ineffectual Endeavours at it. Can it be said the Work is perform'd, because he does but what he then can do? That is just as if a Farmer shou'd neglect Plowing in Season, and Sowing in Seed-time, so as to Reap any Harvest, thereby to live, and to discharge his Rent; and shou'd afterwards at the Years end, lament his own Idleness, and be plunged in Debt for the Rent, and in want of Bread for Life's Sustenance; tho' he then endeavoured what he cou'd to no purpose: Cou'd it then be said the Land was Plowed, the Seed Sown, and the Rent Paid, and he a good Husband, and must receive the Land-lord's Acquittance, and Reap a good Harvest; only because he now does what he can do, which is just nothing at all to the main Work. In sum, the whole intent of the Gospel-mercy, is to produce a good Life, thro' faith in Christ, as the sole condition of all the Promises, and of Salvation it self: Which must therefore quite exclude that trick of thinking to Cheat God with the Will for the Deed.

XX. The 6th objection I shall produce is, the Parable our Saviour has given in the 20th Chapter of St. Matth. Which may seem applicable to this Matter: Where we are told that he that went to Work in the Vineyard the last Hour of the Day, that is the 11th Hour, received as much Wages as he that began early in the Morning; which according to this Application (in the Sense some people make of it) may seem to imply, that the latest Repentance will be as acceptable to God as the earliest. But I answer, *First*, They misunderstand this Parable clearly, for it relates only to Bap-

tifmal Repentance : The Vineyard is the Church of God, call'd in Scripture, *The Vineyard of the Lord of Hosts, and the Vineyard which his right Hand hath Planted* : And to come to Labour in this Vineyard, is to come to be a Member of this Church, which all People are made by Baptism. Now some may be converted to Christianity whilst Young; others when they are Old; and the Oldest person converted to Christianity, and Baptized, is promised Salvation as well as the Youngest, if they *Work in the Vineyard*, that is, live a good Life, the remainder of their time. So this has nothing to do with the case in hand. Secondly, I answer, If this did relate (as it does not) to the Repentance of wicked Christians after Lapse into sinful Life; yet take it all right, and you will find the Sinner that comes to Work, must Work at least *one Hour of the Day* and as the Day contains 12 Hours to Work, so he that began to Work the 11th Hour wrought one Hour, as the 12th Verse says. Now the Life of Man is the Day, and divide the ordinary Life of Man which is 70 Years, into 12 equal Parts, and each Part will be 5 Years and 10 Months; that is, within 2 Months of 6 Years: And so long at least, must every old Penitent be obliged to live a good Life, according to this Sense of it : For the last Man did not receive his Penny for being Idle, but for working that Hour; and if he had done nothing till the time of reckoning, that is till Death, 'tis certain, he had receiv'd nothing but Stripes : So that we see, this can make nothing for a *Death-Bed Repentance*, but very much against it, even in that Sense of the Parable.

XXI. The 7th Objection, I shall produce is, that by this Doctrine, no Body need offer at any Repentance, upon Death-Bed; for all will be vain.

I Answer, *Death-Bed Repentance* will not be in vain, notwithstanding all I have said; for,

1st. To good Christians it is useful, it will avail for Death-Bed Sins of the Mind, and such Infirmities as are appendant to Human Nature.

The failings and Incidents of good Livers themselves, even of the vertuouslest moral People, do need Repentance

tance; and it is fit to close up decently the former long and true Repentance of our Lives with this last conclusion of Piety, as God gives us time; whilst Breath does last, we must end devoutly, and lift up our Hands in his Name. And the same may be said of usefulness or effectualness of it, upon the misfortune of any late single Lapse, into a greater Sin also, if suddenly taken up, repair'd, and amended all we can: Which lamented, abhorred and amended Mischance, cannot truly then denominate the Man to have been an evil Liver, who did not indulge himself in the Sin, nor continue in it. Tho' if the Man, that lived universally honest, and righteously formerly, has in the last Scene of his Life turned to any sinful Course, and therein continued till Death's last Sickness surpris'd him; we have no promise of Forgiveness reveal'd to us for such, upon account of his former Righteousness; but rather the quite contrary. *Ezek. 18. 24. When the Righteous turneth away from his Righteousness and committeth Iniquity — all his Righteousness shall not be mentioned — In his Sins that he hath sinned, in them shall he Die.* This is the righteous and reveal'd Will of God; and according to his reveal'd Will we must Believe and Teach; we are neither to be concluded by any other Measures, nor depend upon any other Hopes. Yet even in this case, *Death-Bed Repentance* must not be thought useless, tho' Salvation cannot be promised it. And therefore I affirm,

*Secondly,* That to the wickedest Reprobates, it will be useful and avail somewhat, nay, very much; for it gives Glory to God; and by what good Example they are then capable of shewing, with sorrow for their past life, they deter others from those Courses they have followed; and therefore it makes their Condition much better, and their Damnation it self much easier in the other World. There are certainly degrees of Damnation: Our Saviour tells us it shall be more tollerable for Some, than for Others; and that he thrice assures us of, *Matth. 10. 15. and 11. 22 and 11. 24.* And he declares there is a *πείραξις*, a greater Damnation which is recorded in three several Evangelists, *Matth.*

23. 14. *Mat.* 12. 40. *Luke* 20. 47. Now the wickedest, of People may escape part (tho' not the whole) of their Damnation, by even a Death-Bed Sorrow, joyned with such Acts of Repentances as then can be perform'd: And this will surely be a very great Benefit. We know how valuable one drop of cold Water it self was to *Dives*: Every drop of Mercy and mitigation of Tortures in Hell, will be most highly valuable then; even more than all this whole World, and Ten Thousand the like of it can be now. And this is all I can say, with any Truth for their Comfort.

XXII. The *Eighth* and Last Objection, I shall produce, is, that this Doctrine may look like Intrenching too much on God's Power, and our Churches Orders; which in the Rubrick doth prescribe Absolution to be given upon a particular confession of Sins upon the Death-Bed (if it be humbly and heartily desired by the Penitent) which seems to intimate that our Church doth judge such a Repentance may be sincere; at least, that it doth not prejudice all such Repentance to be insincere, because then it wou'd certainly not have prescribed Absolution to be Administred in that Case. Doubtless, God can give a Man true Repentance on his Death-Bed; though Man hath no way to know whether Repentance be true or no, but by amendment of Life. Nor shou'd it be thought that (in such a Case) God is bound to prolong such a Man's Life, that the truth of his Repentance may be discernable to us by it's Fruits: It may be sufficient, that it is discern'd by God, who knoweth the Inclination of the Heart, seeing that to his own Master he standeth or falleth. Yet Men shou'd be, by all fair means, beaten out of their vain Hopes and Confidences, and Religion settled upon a surer bottom of such sincere Devotion, whereunto the promises of Salvation are made.

This Objection, I confess, shou'd be highly regarded by me; as coming from Hands that I have the greatest Veneration for, yet I humbly think it may be answer'd thus.



First, For our Churches Order, I think it a very reasonable one; yet I cannot thereon establish any particular Determination of her Opinion in this Doctrine. It is our greatest Happiness, that our Church has so wisely kept such a Latitude, both in her Injunctions and Articles of Religion, as to leave room enough for wholesome Doctrines of Piety and good Life; and yet sufficiently to Fence all necessary Articles of our Faith, without determining too nicely in such things as might clogg the Terms of Communion with her, as the *Lutherans*, *Calvinists*, and some other Parties of Christians have done, as well as the *Romanists*: So that both those who believe this Doctrine about *Death-Bed Repentance* just as I do, and those who do not, may joyn agreeably in the same Communion, and neither of them can dash the other with the Churches Authority. The agreeableness to Scripture, and to the general design of Christ, must be the Rule of measuring the Merit of this Cause; and what is most serviceable to the good of Souls, and to the promotion of Piety, must herein be pitched upon.

As to the *Absolution*, I have own'd that a *Death-Bed Repentance*, is of great use, and will do much good even to the wickedest Reprobates; and when any sort of Repentance can avail any thing, the Absolution will promote the good of it; which therefore, our Church in Charity allows. 'Tis true, If our Church had the same Opinion of Absolution, as the *Romish Church* has, that is, supposing Attrition, or at most Contrition, as their *Catechesis Romana* has it, *per Auricularem Confessionem peccatoris, & Absolutionem Sacerdotis, scelerum omnium veniam condonari*: That by Absolution thus qualified, with the Sinners Contrition and Confession, all Sins, whatsoever, shall be forgiven; even as to the eternal Guilt, with respect to the Sentence of the Day of Judgment: I shou'd not know then what to say, for offering Absolution to one that I believed had not true Contrition. But all that our Church means by Absolution, being only giving them the Peace of the Church; forgiving them what the Church can forgive, which has a Power of *Binding or Loosing, Retaining or Remitting* the Temporal

Temporal Punishment of Sins in this World, by excluding Sinners from, or receiving them to those means of Salvation which are in the Church's Power, as to the Prayers, Word, and Sacraments; not forgiving Sins in the eternal Sense of forgiving, which is God's only peculiar judicatory Act; in which Sense, none can forgive Sins but God alone; tho' a Father may in this World forgive his Son all his Faults or Sins against him, yet God, perhaps, may not forgive them; and the Clergy have but a paternal Power in the Church: For every Sin hath a *double Guilt*, one in respect of God whom it offends, and the other in respect of the Church, whereof the Sinner is a Member; and which he scandalizes by the affronting her Authority. Now the Church can forgive what belongs to her, and God only what belongs to him: Tho' still without the Church's forgiveness, there's no reason to hope for God's; as an ungracious abusive Son, that never had, or cared for his Father's forgiveness, is never likely to have God's forgiveness. Taking Absolution, I say, in this true Sense, 'tis in the Church's Power to give it to whom she pleases; even to them she knows to be in the most *desperate Condition*, as it is in a Father's Power, if he pleases, to forgive the most wicked Son, tho' he were sure God wou'd never forgive him.

*Secondly*, The giving the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's-Supper, will I suppose, be granted to be a more sacred and higher Act of the Church's Power and Favour, than a bare Absolution, which is usually but a preliminary to the Holy Sacrament; and yet I know no Rule of our Church that flatly enjoins me to Refuse that Sacrament to the wickedest at their Death, if they be not Excommunicated, and seem Penitent and Desirous of it: Nay, Our Saviour gave it to *Judas*, whom he knew to be unworthy. *See more of this in the Postscript at the end of the Book.*

*Thirdly*, I do not presume to prejudice any particular Person how wicked soever; and when called to Visit him; tho' I can't say such flattering Things to him, and give such healing Doctrines as wou'd infect the  
Surviv-

Survivors; yet I trouble him not with oppressive Truths then, nor *break the bruised Reed*; nor after his Death do I make peremptory Judgments of this, or that particular Man, (much less before his Death) *to his own Master I leave him to fall or stand*. But yet in my teaching People truth about Repentance, who are not yet on their Death-Bed, I cannot but own that he who has lived a wicked Life under the profession of Christianity, and has no other Repentance to plead but the Death-Bed one, is under no promise of the Gospel that I can tell of; and so according to the known Revelation of the Covenants of God with Mankind in Scripture cannot, be saved.

Neither herein do I presume to *limit God's Power*, 'tis God has limitted himself, He has laid the Bounds, of that Salvation which himself is the Author of; and has declar'd, that without those Bounds, that is without such and such Conditions, there's no Salvation to be had. May not I reasonably say then, that it is *impossible* for things to be otherwise than God hath declared them; and that God *cannot save us* thro' a flat contradiction to all his eternal Rules, and undispensable Methods.

That God can give a Man true Repentance on his Death-Bed, seems to me the same thing as to say, God can give a Man a good Life on his Death-Bed, who never had it before: For I know no other true Repentance, after Baptismal Repentance; but that which is an actual good Life, that is the only true, the only Considerable, the only essential Part of true Repentance; the first part is the Godly Sorrow, but the next is the only material Part, that is the Work, the good Life; without that, the first signifies nothing, and therefore never can be call'd a true Repentance, with reference to the Lapsed after Baptism: Nor can God ever be satisfied with that alone at the end of a wicked Life in Christianity, any more than a Husband-man can with the Bark or Wood of his Orchard-Trees, instead of the Fruit thereof. If I agree with my Gardner, for Fruit yearly, and he brings me nothing but dry Leaves or some Buds or Bloisoms, of the Trees, shou'd I accept of that

## 60 The Death-Bed Repentance

that and pay him the promised Reward? Even so we know what Fruit God has Covenanted for; and shall *a sorrow only* (tho never so true) which is at best but the Blossom, serve God instead of the Fruit; No, *The Tree which bringeth not forth good Fruit is hewn down and cast into the Fire*; especially after long enough waiting; Why should it cumber the Ground any longer?

I do not think that God should be obliged to prolong any ones Life, only to make the truth of his Repentance discernable to us: For it is no great matter what we think of this or that particular Man's Condition; but that if God sees the Sinner's sorrow so sincere that he wou'd certainly live well if he had more time, and that God upon this account judged him worthy of Mercy, he wou'd then undoubtedly give him time to come under the terms of Mercy *by the right and only way*: That is, by a good Life; seeing God has pleased to confine himself to that way only, through Christ, after evil Life, in Christianity. And this seems much more Regular and Natural, than to break his own most solemn Sanctions, and save People contrary to all his express Protestations, and his known Covenants and declared Will, and Methods of the Gospel, which is to *Reward every one according to his Works*: And unless we take this or some such Method or way of explaining Repentance, I confess I know not at all, how Men can be beaten out of their *vain Hopes and Confidence*; nor how Religion can be settled upon such a Bottom, as can any other way so well comport with all the Gospel Promises and Threats, and so utterly rescind the false Glosses of carnal minded People, and sensual Livers.

I have been told, indeed, by some, that this is very *hard Doctrine* to be given wicked Livers on their Death-Bed, when they seem Penitent, and we are called to assist them; and have been asked, what I could say to them then, or what help I could give them. I Answer, We are not obliged in such Case, to press them with these grating Thoughts; nor is it either Charitable or prudent to Express them with afflicting Denunciations of God's Wrath; but we shou'd handle them with

all

all the Tendernefs we can ; yet fo far only, as confifts with Truth : And efpecially have a care leaft we bring fuch dangerous Remedies to their Sores, as we know may make their Diftemper Catching, and Infect the Survivors. I therefore Exhort them to make their Refolution of Amendment as firm as they can ; beg heartily for Pardon, make all the Satisfaction they are able, but rely only on Chrift's Satisfaction ; make Reftitution to their utmoft, unto all they have wrong'd : Reclaim as much as they can by good Council all whom they help'd to lead Aftray : Be as Devout as they can, and trust in God, and that then, according to the fincerity of their Refolution, and truth of their Repentance, God who only fees the Heart, even where the Heart cannot truly fee itfelf, will deal with them accordingly, and either grant them longer time to live well here, or elfe they muft with Refignation fubmit to his Will, and they fhall not loofe the benefit of all the Good they can do now. Thefe and the like are the higheft Cordials I can give them in fuch Cafe: I avoid all difputes then, as unfeafonable ; and much more do I avoid all piercing Doctrines brought from the Terrors of the Lord, which then wou'd be improper: But now is my bufinefs to infift on.

XXIII. It may not be unfeafonable now to add a few Words about the undifpensable ufeulnefs and neceffity to Religion, of this notion of faving Repentance, which muft fo far invalidate the Death-Bed one : Indeed it might almoft be thought an affront to the Reader, to imagine he could not fee it by this time ; but there are fome Capacities that are better Wrought upon by plain, and fometimes verbose and repeated preffing of Truths, which otherwife might loofe their weight with them. I fhall be but fhort. The ufeulnefs and neceffity of this Doctrin is fo great, that without holding faft to it, we loofe the main force of all the Arguments brought from the Terrors of the Lord, *knowing the Terrors of the Lord* (fays the Apoftle) *we perfuade Men*, 2. Cor. 5. 11. But thofe Terrors will loofe their greateft Awe, when there's a poffibility of a Trick to efcape them.



them. 'Tis true, the Advocates of *Death-Bed Repentance* themselves, do allow but a possibility of escape, and can never be sure of it : But yet there are desperate Gamesters enough, that will venture upon hazard, whilst they have any possibility in Prospect; tho' there be Odds against them; but take away all Possibility, and then you stop them. And so till this undoubted Truth be received, which is beyond all contradiction infallibly certain, that it is impossible for any meer *Death-Bed Repentance* effectually to save, or be the means of saving any wicked Livers among Christians: Till this be firmly believed, I say, many desperate Gamesters, desperate Sinners, will still venture the hazard upon the very Hopes of the last Cast. But let them believe the Impossibility of this as firmly as I do, and I am sure it will help some of them to look more carefully to themselves in time, if they have any Sense in them, or believe they have any Soul at all.

*Secondly*, Without holding fast to this Doctrine, we fall into the worst of Popish Errors, or rather into that which is the design of all their Errors, to give hopes of Salvation to evil Livers, at the end of a wicked Life.

*Thirdly*, Without holding fast to this Doctrine and having other sort of Repentance to shew, then the *Death-Bed*, that is, a former Penitent good Life, without this, I say, we void our very Baptism, by breaking our part of the Covenant utterly; and so put our selves from any Claim to Christ's part of that Covenant he makes with us in his Blood. So that we see, in short, both the usefulness, and absolute necessity of this Doctrine to Christian Piety.

Indeed, The false Notions about *Saving Repentance*, and the Errors about *Saving Faith*, are the two main Splitting Rocks, that have so much Shipwreck'd the the Lives of Protestants. These are some of the strong Holds of Satan, 2 Cor. 10. 4. As Popery has almost destroyed the Morality of Papists, so these Errors and some ill Examples from Atheistical Livers, have brought Protestants unto too near a degree of the Viciousness of Papists in their Lives. So that the Apostle had need

to charge us, to hold fast the Doctrine which is according to Godliness, 1 Tim. 6. 3. The Doctrine which necessitates a godly Life, which every one must grant this Doctrine is mainly instrumental to. Now, since there is nothing wanting on God's Part for our Salvation, and since on our Part nothing can be wanting but a good Life through Faith in him; a good Life is a short Lesson, which may be understood and learn'd by meer Children; and yet, this is the grand *Unum Necessarium*, the only one thing which is necessary, whilst the World is busied about many things. And since true saving Repentance is nothing else but such a good Life, which being the only thing on our Part, that can fit us for that immortal Condition hereafter, wherein we shall live Eternally, either in everlasting Bliss, or everlasting Woe. What thou'd we do, but apply our Hearts sincerely and timely to this above all things; and not think to Cheat our own Souls, with any Tricks of Satan's Policy; much less, to Cheat the Almighty God of his expected good Life from us; to Rob him of the Purchase of his Son's Blood, which was to Purify us to himself, a peculiar People zealous of good Works.

Now, what I have affirm'd of the Death-Bed Sickness must be true in some degree (for the same reason) concerning *impotent decrepit old Age*, which is but a Death-sickness too; and renders Men as incapable of performing the work of Salvation. And tho' most Men may be long before that time Reprobated, and so irretrievable, according as they have filled up the measure of their Iniquities; yet all Men whatsoever, the nearer they come to decrepid Age in Impenitance, the nearer they are to the fatal Period of the impossibility of true Repentance: And the greatness of the difficulty of it, will from the beginning of their very Youth, be always more and more increased, with the increase of their Years; which shews the senseless Foilly and stupid Madnes of deferring it. *Can the Blackmoor change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots, then may they also do Good, that are accustomed to do Evil, Jerem. 13. 23.*

## 64 The Death-Bed Repentance

I need not here prove how little hopes the Primitive Church had of any late or old Age Repentance of Christians; how unlikely they thought it to Save any, who had lived a wicked Life in Christianity; and what Severity they exacted in any Repentance after an ill Life, tho' but a short time continued in: How great their Penances were; how long they were kept from the Communion, and scarce admitted till their dying Day, tho' living many Years in the greatest Austerity and Devotion, to approve their Repentance: All this is sufficiently done to the hand of the plainest English Reader, by the Learn'd and Pious Doctor *Cave*, in his Book call'd, *Primitive Christianity*; which supercedes the Necessity of my lengthning this Paper, with any thing of that here; tho' it might be to some Readers one of the greatest Arguments for the Justification of the severest Part of my Doctrine of Repentance, which yet is not mine, but the Scriptures.

And so I have done with this Section of the true Notion of saving Repentance, and particularly, that pretence of the Death-Bed one.

---

### S E C T. III.

*Of the many Objections that have occur'd since my first Publication of this Doctrine, with their Answers.*

Several Objections have been rescinded or cut off, by what I have above already spoken in the first Section, more than I formerly Publish'd; yet some of them itself, I shall here, among the rest, particularly consider also, for fuller Satisfaction to them.

I. The first Objections I shall begin with, are contain'd in a Letter to me, from the Honourable Sir *Robert King*; which I shall take the liberty to Transcribe here exactly, with my Answer to it. But first I shall premise a Letter of his long before, acknowledging himself of my Opinion.

Rockingham

Rockingham, July 12. 1705.

Reverend Sir,

I Have received the Favour of your two Books and three Letters, for which you had sooner had my Thanks but that I defer'd it, till I had finish'd reading your Answer to Mr. Apgill; which being my Sunday's Work, and my Head too much out of Order, made the Delay so long. I entirely agree with you at the madness and folly of a Death-Bed's Repentance, on which, tho' you are pretty full, it is impossible to speak too much: The desire of paying a Debt is no Payment, or lessens any part of the Principal. When I was in London, (in our Calamities) I heard Doctor Sharp (now Arch-Bishop of York) Preach a whole Sermon to the Religious Societies on that Subject; and Concluded thus: To what purpose then do we Ministers go to the Sick on their Death-Beds; even to perswade them to Repent, that their Pains may be the less in Hell: Had he said in Hopes or Perhaps, &c. I had not so much wondred; but he spoke it positively: At which I then wondred, and have often since thought of, but could not understand. But when I came to that in your Book, of the poor Benefit a Penitent has by a Death-Bed's Repentance, on that you are so clear, that you have not only Explain'd what Doctor Sharp said, but have left nothing on that Subject unsaid to satisfy me. I remember, I once ask'd Doctor Horneck (than whom none was more frequently sent for to dying

F

People)

## 66 The Death-Bed Repentance

People) whether he ever knew one, that after his deep Sorrow for Sin, and great Resolutions of Amendment, if God wou'd spare him; did keep to those Resolutions upon recovery of Health; to which he answered, Not one. I heard a Minister of Dublin, say, he was sent for to one on whom the Glas-House fell, and broke almost to pieces; who told him, that the torment of his Mind for the bad Life he had lived, was so great, that he felt no Pain from the Chirurgeon's Hands that was Setting his Bones: And made wonderful Promises what Life he would live, shou'd God spare him: He Recover'd, and return'd with the Dog: Which when the Minister minded him of, he Smiled, but went on.

I am,

Reverend Sir,

In Heart and Mind,

Your most faithful Servant

ROBERT KING.

## The LETTER of Objections.

Rockingham Nov. 11. 1705.

Reverend Sir,

**I** Have taken several Occasions of discoursing your Thoughts of a Death-Bed Repentance: Indeed, having a mind that the Bottom of it shou'd be Sifted; or at least, that I may know what can be said against it: I am sure, if it holds Water in  
all



all its Parts, some of our Divines have been too Remiss, in not preaching it. Some tell me, you confine God in his noblest Attribute, his Mercy: My Answer is, Can he confine himself? And if he can, whether he has not on<sup>e</sup> minded me of the Covenant God made with Adam, which when broken, a new one was made: To which I add, God seems to reserve a dispensing Power in all his Threatnings; when he pronounced that heavy Judgment against Ahab by Elijah; yet you see upon his Repentance, (tho' an insincere one) he deferr'd the Execution: And why may he not pardon the Sinner upon his Death-Bed, when his Repentance is sincere? Has not God dispensed even with his moral Law, (perhaps I speak like a Lay-Man, but you will direct me.) In the 20th of Exodus, He says, Thou shalt not Steal. In the 11th, And let every Man borrow of his Neighbour, and every Woman of her Neighbour, Jewels of Silver, and Jewels of Gold: And the Lord gave the People Favour in the sight of the Egyptians: That is, the Israelites did Rob the Egyptians. I do but hint these things to you, that I may have your Thoughts of them; for you see by a former Letter of mine to you, that I have been a good while of your Opinion; and what things I write now are but of late date.

I am,

With true Love and Respect,

Reverend Sir,

Your very humble Servant

ROBERT KING.

The ANSWER to the above LETTER.

Honoured Sir,

Novem. 14. 1705.

**I** Had last Night the favour of Yours with great satisfaction: You have in one Line so fully Answer'd the greatest Objection of limittin<sup>g</sup> or confining God in his Mercy: And if you'll please once more to read Number 22. of Repentance, you'll see how largely I had obviated that: To which add, that 'tis an unspeakable Mercy that God will accept of a late (even a very late) good Life, after the longest perhaps, and greatest wicked Life in Christianity, so it be a good Life at all, and not a meer impotent Death-Bed Grunting, or pretence of new Life then; which must, at best, be nothing but an Expression of Sorrow and Resolution; which is but the necessary effect of such Horror and Consternation as must fall upon all that apprehend themselves under a present Arrest for Judgment; and cannot then live the good Life required, which is the only condition of Salvation, and even of all the merciful Acceptance of God, through the unexpressible gracious Redemption of Christ; upon which only score, after so long breaking our baptismal Vow, we can hope for any Pardon at the Judgment-Seat of Christ our most merciful Saviour. For indeed, otherwise I know no reason why it may not be as well termed a confining God in his noblest Attributes of Mercy, to say, that Judas or the wickedest (that are in sorrowful Trouble, and have but a little time to think before they dye) can't be saved on that only account; for

I do not believe it was that last Act of Judas's making Away himself that Damn'd him, but the Sin he committed all his Life, and before his last repenting Sorrow, which came too late. (See Numb. 16.)

In the next place, as to your second Objection of the two Covenants, pray see Number 4. of the Section of Faith. There's certainly as much need for a third Covenant to save those wicked Christians that have lived all their Life contrary to the Covenant of Grace, that is, the second Covenant, as there was of that to save those that had broken the first Covenant; and till we see that third Covenant, we may as well conclude it as impossible for such to be Saved by the second Covenant, as for Adam and his Posterity to be Saved by the first Covenant. To what you add, that God seems to reserve a dispensing Power in all his Threatnings. I Answer, All his Threatnings are conditional (except ye repent) and they are of two sorts, Temporal or Eternal Punishments; the Eternal none but a sincere Repentance can prevent; the Temporal even an unsincere and outward shew of Humiliation, may at least suspend for a while, if not totally prevent: For all Temporal Punishments God sends for one of these two ends; either the amendment of the Sinner, or the warning of others that are Impenitent. Now an unsincere Repentance, if well acted, may be sufficient Example to others; and so that end of God's being served by it, when the Sinner himself is incapable of being truly Amended: God seldom lays earthly Vengeance without some necessity for it, on those that are running unavoidably to the eternal Venge-

70 **The Death-Bed Repentance**

ance ; for God delights not in sending wordly Mischiefs on poor Mortals where the Reason ceases. So you know he suspended his Temporal Judgments from Pharoah, that of Excision, along while, and does so with most others : But what has this to do with that Eternal Punishment which whosoever wilfully and presumptuously defys all his Life long, he has no possibility of escape ; because it is a Life sooner or later, of virtuous practice in true Faith, and true Amendment only : That is, the right Repentance which can any wise entitle him that has been a wicked Christian to Christ's Redemption, and so to God's Mercy. This is all the Tenure of the second Covenant, and the Gospel of Grace : and can we look for another Gospel, or a third Covenant ? You ask, Why may not God pardon the Sinner on his Death-Bed, when his Repentance is sincere ? I Answer, It cannot, if he dyes, be sincere then, if he had it not before ; because a sincere saving Repentance in the very Essence of it, includes the good Life actually : And if God saw his Sorrow and Resolution so sincere as that it wou'd produce the good Life, he wou'd give him time to produce it ; which is proveable from God's Nature, Goodness, Mercy ; and those Scriptures and Reasons I produce in Number 19. Sect. of Rep. I must add here, that the sorrowing Resolutions, and the actual good Life following it, are the two things which make up that one Compositum, called true or saving Repentance, after Lapse from the second Covenant of our Baptism : And as the Embrio of a Man which is in order to Life or Soul, can't be the Man till the Soul be added, so the sorrowing

rowing Resolution which is in order to the penitent good Life, can't be the thing call'd saving Repentance, till the good Life be actually added to it : The sorrowing Intention of Amendment, be it never so sincere, can only entitle (through Faith in Christ) them that convert from Infidelity to be allow'd Baptism, which for that time washes away all Sin ; but then, the intent of that Baptism is a future good Life ; and if we always after live a bad Life, the sincerity of any Intentions will not do again, till a good Life be added ; for 'tis a folly and perverting of the whole Gospel to think a bare Intention how sincere soever, is the essential adequate condition of our Redemption by Christ ; and if it be not, how can we be saved by it ? O that People were in earnest sincere, then they would not lay down such Measures to themselves nor to others. It can't be allow'd that God shou'd ever have dispensed with his own moral Law : It is not contrary to the sixth Commandment that supream Magistrates who have the power of the Sword, and consequently God's implicit Commission shou'd kill the Enemies of the Nation they Rule, much less was it contrary to the eighth Commandment that Moses by an explicate Commission Exod. 3. 22. from God's own Mouth, shou'd spoil the Egyptians in that manner ; and so they did by a like Commission kill and spoil the Canaanites, who were no Enemies, till God declared they shou'd be used as such. But suppose it possible, that God shou'd have for once dispenced with some one Precept of his moral Law, by an expresse positive Command for that one Fact ; can it thence follow, that he will



excuse in any one a constant Disobedience to his moral Commandments, and that without any so much as implicit Dispensation: And farther yet, from an explicit or positive Commission so to do. It is not, indeed, my business to Censure that Remissness you speak of, in some of our Divines for not generally preaching this Doctrine, which I assert; 'tis enough for me to look to my own Duty: Nor do I condemn every one of unsincerity, that is not of my Opinion; tho' some, I believe, deal unsincerely, as may be suspected by the looseness of their own Life: But what hindred partly the truth of this Doctrine from getting more general footing among us, I believe, I cou'd give a tollerable account of. 'Tis enough for my satisfaction that many of the Best and Learnedst now living are of my Opinion. But I wish any Opposer (to shorten his trouble) wou'd but Answer me only the 23d Numb. Sect. of Rep. or but the very last Page of the Postscript at the end of the Book. I have made one Observation, that tho' most are against that little Section of the Death-Bed Repentance at first sight, yet I find none against it at the second Reading, and well weighing it, but many Clergy-men have then own'd to me their satisfaction, and among the Best, our now good Lord Primate, whose Letter I have to that purpose. I am Sir,

Your most Devoted

To the Honourable  
Sir Robert King,  
Baronet, at Rockingham.

Humble Servant,  
Edward Nicholson.

After

After this, I had several Letters of full Accordance from that worthy Person, with great Encouragements: One more of them I will here publish, because it is the Reply to my above Answer. And because it was that, which joyned with the request of others, made me promise this present Treatise; tho' I have been hinder'd so long from it, by strange Accidents and Disappointments.

Rockingham Novem. 25. 1705.

Reverend Sir,

**I** Have more than twice or thrice Read your Letter, and the places you refer to in it, and am fully satisfied with the truth of your Assertion; I wish all the World were so too. But yet I have not done with you, for I have some things to say which were in my Thoughts before I wrote to you; That is, That you wou'd make your Argument of a Death-Bed Repentance, a Discourse distinct by it self; and send it to London, to be there Printed; that we may see what the Men of Wit, and that wish it may not be true, can say against it. I confess I do not know any Doctrine can be more useful. I will Repent, I will Repent, is in every Sinners Mouth; and so they say till they come to a Death-Bed. And by the way, give me leave to ask you, whether Men do not commit a horrid Sin in saying, I will Repent? As if God's Grace was to wait on Man's Will, or were in their power to have it when they please. Is not this a Sin of Presumption? No time is ours but the present. And is it not a tempting the Almighty, to say, he shall give me Grace next Year, ~~but~~ I will

excuse in any one a constant Disobedience to his moral Commandments, and that without any so much as implicit Dispensation: And farther yet, from an explicit or positive Commission so to do. It is not, indeed, my business to Censure that Remissness you speak of, in some of our Divines for not generally preaching this Doctrine, which I assert; 'tis enough for me to look to my own Duty: Nor do I condemn every one of unsincerity, that is not of my Opinion; tho' some, I believe, deal unsincerely, as may be suspected by the looseness of their own Life: But what hindred partly the truth of this Doctrine from getting more general footing among us, I believe, I cou'd give a tollerable account of. 'Tis enough for my satisfaction that many of the Best and Learnedst now living are of my Opinion. But I wish any Opposer (to shorten his trouble) wou'd but Answer me only the 23d Numb. Sect. of Rep. or but the very last Page of the Postscript at the end of the Book. I have made one Observation, that tho' most are against that little Section of the Death-Bed Repentance at first sight, yet I find none against it at the second Reading, and well weighing it, but many Clergy-men have then own'd to me their satisfaction, and among the Best, our now good Lord Primate, whose Letter I have to that purpose. I am Sir,

Your most Devoted

To the Honourable  
Sir Robert King,  
Baronet, at Rockingham.

Humble Servant,  
Edward Nicholson.

After

After this, I had several Letters of full Accordance from that worthy Person, with great Encouragements: One more of them I will here publish, because it is the Reply to my above Answer. And because it was that, which joyned with the request of others, made me promise this present Treatise; tho' I have been hinder'd so long from it, by strange Accidents and Disappointments.

---

Rockingham Novem. 25. 1705.

Reverend Sir,

**I** Have more than twice or thrice Read your Letter, and the places you refer to in it, and am fully satisfied with the truth of your Assertion; I wish all the World were so too. But yet I have not done with you, for I have some things to say which were in my Thoughts before I wrote to you; That is, That you wou'd make your Argument of a Death-Bed Repentance, a Discourse distinct by it self; and send it to London, to be there Printed; that we may see what the Men of Wit, and that wish it may not be true, can say against it. I confess I do not know any Doctrine can be more useful. I will Repent, I will Repent, is in every Sinners Mouth; and so they say till they come to a Death-Bed. And by the way, give me leave to ask you, whether Men do not commit a horrid Sin in saying, I will Repent? As if God's Grace was to wait on Man's Will, or were in their power to have it when they please. Is not this a Sin of Presumption? No time is ours but the present. And is it not a tempting the Almighty, to say, he shall give me Grace next Year, ~~but~~ I will

will not take it this : But to return, such a Discourse may prove of mighty Benefit. Good Men will preach it, and the Wicked will see they must amend presently, or be Damn'd. You do not know the Good you may do by publishing such a Discourse : And to be plain, with you, I think you are bound in Conscience to publish it, as every Man is to do what he can to gain Souls to God. Now if I have said any thing that may prevail with you to such a Publication, I will be yet plainer with you : I have heard your Stile excepted against, and that the use of some Words are new or too forced. You may perhaps remember when South wrote against Sherlock, he taxt him with a Trifle, Spelling then instead of than. And you may be sure there will be such Nibbling at your Discourse, which makes me wish it may be so worded that none may except against any Thing but the Matter, and in that you may defie them. Pardon this my Freedom, it is from one that loves you, And is,

Reverend Sir,

Your most

Faithful Servant,

ROBERT KING.

As



As to the Exceptions against my Stile, I told him had we never used new Words, we'd be yet in *Chaucer's* Stile: And I was so utterly unconcern'd for it, that I was resolv'd to make no alteration in my Stile, tho' that was not my Study, I know not a word I have writ but what I found in Print nor will I pretend to exactness, nor any accuracy of Writing: Let them take great care of such Things, that Write only to shew their curiosity of Stile or delicacy of Language, in which, if the *Play-Poets* have not been their Tutors, yet they are capable to be so; and will embellish them in that Faculty of Jangling florid Oratory: The Printers also make many Errors, sometime gross ones, in changing Words too, as I find in all my own Books, as well as in Others: I not being at the place to overlook the Press, the Errata's are not affixed, so the Books come out perhaps without any Amendment, or so much as Caution of any such. So perchance I may have the fate of one so much my Superior in all accomplishments of Learning, Parts, and Piety, the excellent Dr. *Sherlock*; then, instead of *than*, or such like, may be objected to me.

But as to Stile, is it not a folly to be concern'd for the nicety of that, in Questions, where Life or Death eternal, lies at Stake? If but temporal Life were prosecuted, wou'd it not be ridiculous, as well as unjust, in any Judge, when an honest Man has pleaded for his Life, and proved himself innocent by good plain Evidence; to condemn all he has said, because his Stile is Harsh, and out of Fashion. I believe I cou'd, if I pleas'd, give as tickling Eloquence on the subject, as these my snarling Judges can; for it is no such high Attainment: Even conceited Fops, that were good for nothing else, have often, with great labour, attained to it. But if I did it in such Cases as this, I shou'd count my self a Fool for my pains: For I am sure there is more need of a satyrical Stile, to lash the profligate Consciences of this degenerate hellish Age, than a Romantick one to please their Fancies. I have been told in another Letter, which I have from the  
same

same worthy Hand, which here acquaints me with the Exceptions against my Stile; that we have more necessity to whip with Scorpions if we cou'd, to rouse this Lethargick Age, from their pleasing Dreams, whilst they Sleep so deeply in Sin; than to seek to please them with the charming Musick of Eloquence. I wou'd not be thought in this, to detract in the least, from the just Esteem of those great and good Men, that in their excellent modern Writings, have with ease shewn how natural a great Eloquence was to them. They have undoubtedly done good in their way, on such as in these wanton Times, wou'd be more enamour'd on the Dress of Discourses, than the Substance; and 'tis well if they can be catch'd even by gilded nets. But neither must those be condemn'd, who, finding that way wou'd be more expensive of their time and thoughts, as not being so very natural to them, do teach truths more bluntly, and are more intent upon Substance than Dress; they may do good too, in their own Sphere on such honest old fashioned Hearts, as love the Substance of Truth, more than the Dress of it; and let me be reckoned among them. But I know where the Shooe pinches: Did I live, as these Carpers wou'd have me, and teach their Doctrine; my Stile wou'd be good enough. My endeavour is to Speak or Write Truth and Reason, to be understood by plain honest People, to feed their Souls with wholesome Doctrine, not to tickle the Itch of curious Palates. If my meaning be easily understood, tis' enough for me; and that it is so easily understood, I find, by the Anger or Envy of those that cavil at my Stile. But I challenge them, and all the Patrons of *Death-Bed Repentance*, to answer my Reasons: If they give me fair and Reasonable Conviction, I will take it for the greatest kindness; I will then publicly retract all I have Writ, or Spoken on that Head: But if they pretend they can do it, and will not; they are either lazy, or which is worse, they are uncharitable Christians, if they still Rail and Exclaim at me; yet will not oblige the World by convincing or disproving me,

me, to save a Soul from his Error, and all those I may mislead by it ; if it be such a dangerous Error, that there is no safe agreeing with it ; as I take the contrary to be, which made me oppose it.

What hinder'd this Doctrine I am now so blamed for, from getting more general footing among us, I think may be easily accounted for. First Popery had establish'd the contrary: And in that Doctrine perhaps, as it may be in some things Else, the Reformation did not go thorow stitch. *Secondly*, The Severity of it seem'd somewhat too rough, for the more gentle charity of a healing Spirit, as 'tis call'd. *Thirdly*, *Calvinism*, and the solitary Faith, and Justification without good Works, was directly opposite to it. *Fourthly*, The Lay-Presentations in *England*, every one knows were very Numerous, and those usually given by the Lay-Noble-Men to their own Chaplains. Now if my Lord happen'd to live a very ill Life (as some of them, it can't be deny'd, sometimes do) and chanced to dye with no other Repentance than the Death-Bed one, and Funeral Sermons were then in fashion ; How durst his Chaplain decline Preaching, and speaking all the best Things he cou'd of him ; which being only what the *Death-Bed Repentance* cou'd afford ; my Lord must certainly be Embalm'd for Heaven with that : For wou'd his Lady, his Son, the young Lord, and all his noble Relations, endure to have it thought that my Lord is now in Hell among the Devils ? No, let the Chaplain be ware how he incurs that Premunire, and perhaps looses the Presentation too from my young Lord, which may not have yet been given him. Now his task is very hard ; for nothing will hold Water in the Embalming Work, unless he can perswade his Auditors that a *Death-Bed Repentance* may be saving. 'Tis done then, and this Sermon must be published ; and perhaps the Author had no small Name for an approved Preacher ; of good standing too in the University : Must not then the younger Candidates for Divinity, imbibe heartily the Doctrine of this rare Printed Funeral Sermon ; strive to imitate such a commendable Tutor ? and in

## 78 The Death-Bed Repentance

in time propagate their Notions to their Juniors again ; and so onward to posterity ; till the Doctrine had got so strong a Party of Freinds, that it was at last a Crime to oppose it ; as I have found to my no small trouble : Yet I am resolved with the grace of God to go on.

Secondly, The next Objection I shall consider, are what I have met with in Dr Scott's Practical Discourses, Vol. I. in his Sermon concerning a *Death-Bed Repentance*, on *Math. 25. 10*. That excellently Pious Man comes within a very little of my Assertion : So that I can hardly make what he saysto be Objections, if you take him altogether. For Page 202. he says,

First, The *Death-Bed Repentance* " is extremely hazardous, because of the great Difficulty of the Thing it self. We find by Experience, that after a long Course of Sin, 'tis one of the most difficult Things in the World for a Man to reduce himself to a thorough Resolution of Amendment. — 'Tis true, in a sudden Heat and Transport it is an easie matter for a Man to resolve any thing when he is in a Pet against his Sins, or his Mind is chased into a religious Temper. But, alas ! these inconsiderate Purposes are generally the greatest Cheats in the World ; for they rarely, if ever, work any Alteration in the Soul : — And thus to resolve, is, I confess, the easiest thing in the World : — So that unless he be armed with great Consideration, animated with invincible Courage, and aided by a mighty Grace, after all his Deliberation he will either not resolve at all, or, which is almost as bad, resolves with Reserves and Exceptions. —

Secondly, He Argues from " the great Impotency and Indisposition of Death-Bed Penitents to perform it. — Alas ! how unable and unfit is a Man for these things, when he lies languishing on a Death-Bed. — Now in this sad Extremity (when Reason is wholly disabled, weaken'd, and impair'd) What can the poor Wretch do ? His sinful Soul sits drouzing on the very Brinks of a dismal Eternity ; and Death's cold Hand is thrusting it headlong down

“ down; ——— When by the Distemper of her bodily Organs the Soul is so Stunn'd and Stupifi'd, that she can neither discern where she is, nor whither she is going. What capacity can a Man be in to make a new judgment of things in the midst of the incessant Hurrys and Distractions of a Death-Bed, when he cannot consider a quarter of an Hour together, but is interrupted every Moment, by a thousand Accidents and Avocations : So that to refer our Repentance to a Death-Bed, is the same thing as to retire into a Battle to Meditate.

*Thirdly*, He Argues from “ the little reason such a Man hath to expect any extraordinary Assistance from God, when a Man hath slighted all God's Invitations to Repentance, and wilfully turn'd a deaf Ear to all the secret Whispers and Importunities of God's blessed Spirit, when he hath all his life time rejected the Motions and Tenders of God's Grace ; upon this Resolution, that he wou'd Sin on as long as he was able, and never Repent till he cou'd he Sin no longer : With what Confidence can he expect that God shou'd vouchsafe him in his dying Hour, that extraordinary Grace which he stands in need of, and without which he must die for ever. ——— For unless we suppose God to be a *Being* that loves to be provoked, one that is taken with Affronts and Injuries, and consequently measures his Favours to us by the degrees and numbers of our Rebellions against him ; we cannot reasonably expect that he shou'd be then most kind to us, when we have offended him as much as we are able, and wou'd never be persuaded to repent of our Wickedness, till we were able to offend him no more.

All this which I have Quoted from him he prosecutes more fully for nine Pages long. And for sixteen Pages more he prosecutes the same danger of the *Death-Bed Repentance* with many Arguments more : And yet upon the whole, he says, he dare not say that a true Repentance is at that time absolutely impossible.

His



His Reasons I must now consider: He first premises, that *the very life of Repentance consists in the universal subjection of our Souls to God in a hearty resolution of obeying him.* But I say, There can be no sincere subjection of the Soul to God at that time, in such a Resolution as will sincerely hold, if the Man dies. For if it had been sincere God wou'd have given him time to produce that obedience by a good Life, which is the only thing that a Resolution is good for. He gives three Reasons for his not daring to say such true Repentance is absolutely impossible then.

First, *Because de facto, we sometimes find that the Resolutions of a Sick-Bed have proved effectual upon Recovery.* But I answer, that does not come home to my Case, which is, of them that die upon the Sicknefs. As to them that Recover, as I said before, God might have seen their Resolution sincere, and so gave them time to perform their true Repentance. Page 198. He asks, *What Reason can be given why some Men may not perform in Eternity what they promised on their Death-Beds, as well as others do after their Recovery, what they promised on their Sick-Beds.* I Answer, because the business of a good Life is for this World, before they come to Eternity: For there is no repenting in Eternity that can do any good there, nor can the Duties of Temperance, Chastity, just Payments of our Debts, Charity to the Poor, &c. be done in another Life in Eternity, if it be not done here.

His Second Argument to prove the possibility of a true Death-Bed Repentance, is, *That upon a Death-Bed oft times the Arguments of Repentance have a more immediate access to the Minds of Men, than at any other time.* I Answer, This is Contrary to what I lately Quoted from him, *how unable and unfit a Man is for these things when he lies Languishing on a Death-Bed.* ——— And what Capacity can a Man be in to make a new Judgment of things, when he cannot consider a quarter of an Hour together. ——— And 'tis the same thing to apply to Repentance then as to retire into a Battle to Meditate. To this same Second Reason he subjoyns these Words,

tho'

*tho' I confess it is a stupendious effect for a Soul to be changed in the short twinkling of a Death-Bed Repentance, yet when I consider the mighty Influence which the Arguments of Religion may then be reasonably supposed to have upon her; I dare not say 'tis absolutely impossible, especially considering, thirdly and lastly (which is his last Reason) that how impossible so ever it be to human Power, yet 'tis not impossible to the Grace of God. I Answer, Tho' I grant that, yet, How does he prove that God does not in that Case give him longer Life? For that miraculous Grace to have its effect by a good Life; for that very Grace is a greater Miracle, than lengthening his Life wou'd be? He further says, 'Tis true, indeed, God ordinarily vouchsafes his Grace to Men proportionably to their Improvement of it; and I confess if he proceeds by this Rule with a dying Penitent, he has less reason to expect God's Grace now, than in any former Period of his Life; but yet we see the Grace of God does not always proceed by stated Rules and Proportions. But I ask, Does not God proceed by his own Rules? He further adds, Sometimes God hath given the largest Measures of his Grace to those who have made the least Improvements of it. But I confess I never saw that. Who knows (he says) but the good God may sometimes, and in some peculiar Cases, take pity upon a Man, and by a more than ordinary Grace concur with his Endeavours, and render them successful. But I say, If he do, he will give them time to be successful. All that can be said therefore in the case (says he) is this, that an internal change of Soul from a state of Disobedience to a state of universal Subjection to God, is indispensibly necessary to Salvation. This I grant most certain. But then (says he) such a Change is possible to the Death-Bed Penitent, but alas 'tis but barely possible. And what of all that? How does he prove that God will not give time then, for that Change to work its effect, which must certainly be a good Life? Or if the Man first Died, how does he prove the possibility of the Change then? Or what danger is there in holding the impossibility then, that he dare not say it? Which he expresses so often, that that one Sentence I dare not, seems to be his greatest*

**Argument :** All the danger I can see, is the fear of disturbing the Thoughts of some such dying wicked Person, which is not so necessary a Charity, as shou'd be our Charity for the Living, to keep them out of the like danger.

But I am beholden to him for one Concession he gives in the 227, Page. *Indeed (says he) if I cou'd recover a dying Man by telling him that he is not dying, it wou'd be cruelty in me to pronounce him past Recovery : And so, cou'd I save the dying Penitent, by telling him he is secure ; I were very much to blame, shou'd I say his Case is desperate: But alas, if it be so, it will be so, let me say what I please ; so that in pronouncing that it will be so, I only make him sensible of it, a few Moments sooner : I do but shew him what he must trust to, and what he will presently be convinced of by woful Experience : And by ringing out a Passing Bell to his departing Soul, I do him this kindness, at least, that he will not be in Hell before he is aware of it. And certainly this is some Charity, tho' it be severe.* Now all this fits the Case of my Doctrine exactly. But yet (says he) I do not represent the Case to be altogether desperate, tho' I must confess some very great and Eminent Divines have done so. I thank him heartily for that ; in giving me such good Company to follow. And how does he know but they were as Charitable as he ? 'Tis, indeed, a great Tendernefs and Charity to provide for burying with care the Body of a poor Man that has lived desperately and wilfully poor all his Life by Prodigality. Yet it is a far greater Charity to provide for the living Bodies of his Widow, and Orphants, and all the living Poor of the Neighbourhood ; if that cou'd in likelihood be done by letting his Carcefs hang upon Gibbets. Even so 'tis a great Tendernefs and Charity to treat with carefulnefs and compassion the perishing Soul of a desperate Sinner, that has been presumptuously and wilfully so, all his Life, till his Soul be finally dead in Trespasses and Sins ; and now is lamentably going to the Lot it has chosen for its final Abode : 'Tis indeed a great Charity to be with all the bowels of Compassion concern'd

for

for it then. But it is a much greater Charity to be concern'd to provide for all the Souls of his surviving Family, and all others whom his Example might Influence, when that is in most likelihood to be done, by letting them see or believe the terror of that wicked Souls fate; which they cannot be assured of till he is Dead; and then, what they think, can do neither good nor hurt to his Soul: But it may do the greatest good to their own Souls, to have no hopes then of his; and it might (when perhaps nothing else wou'd) hinder their own coming to that sad Condition.

But all Dr. Scot aims at, is to encourage that dying Soul with possibility, and thereby leave nothing to discourage the Survivors from following his steps, but hazard; and that hazard must in Charity be suppos'd to have been escap'd by him that is Dead: And why shou'd not they then be so charitable to themselves, as to hope to escape in like manner? *I have endeavour'd* (says he) *to shew that true Repentance is not impossible on a Death-Bed, tho' extremely hazardous and difficult; so that still their might be some hope, enough to encourage the Sinners utmost endeavours.* But I say, my way gives him more Encouragement, by promising him hopes of recovering from Death to Life in this very World, if his Resolution and change of Mind be sincere and true. To this Point Dr. Scot speaks nothing at all; perhaps he never thought on it. But some of my Adversaries are more angry at me for this, than for all the rest. What, are they more displeas'd at me for coming nearer to themselves than those do, that hold no possibility at all in this Case? Yes they wou'd rather I held no Possibility, because they cou'd find more Latitude for wrangling against the utter Impossibility, than they can against the Probability, nay or Certainty of God's giving the Sinner further Life, when he sees his Resolution and change of Mind sincere. But I shall say more on that Point hereafter before I conclude: For if there be any Possibility at all, I am fully satisfied it must be on

that account; and that must be a much more exciting and comfortable Doctrine for the Sick and infinitely more safe Doctrine for the Living, that are yet in Health. And thus I have done with Dr Scot's Arguments, who has really in effect overthrown them himself, if any one will but read out that whole Sermon, and his next following it; they will find there is scarce a Hairs breadth, between his sort of Possibility, and Impossibility it self,

III. The next Objections I shall consider are, indeed, from a most worthy hand, who satisfied me he did not give them as his own Opinion; but as what others might offer, that I might be apprized of them, and to try how I cou'd Answer them.

He asks, *What final Reprobation is sure to be reprobate is never to be sorry; 'tis to be without sense of Duty: But the Death-Bed Penitent hath both sense and earnest desire of Duty: He was not sensible before, but now he is, whereas he might continue wicked yet in his Sickness: He has a Disposition now to do well; and the Scripture seems always open to such Repentance; and so sorrow with change of Mind may do.* I Answer, Final Reprobation is when they have come to the last extremity of Iniquity that God will bear with, when he gives them over to themselves, forsakes them, withdraws his Spirit, and so hardens them, and rejects them: Which hardness in Sin all their Life, does not bar but that they may be sorry at their Death, or last Sickness: Which may no more bring them to Heaven, than their being sorry after Death; their day of Grace being then spent, and *night cometh when no Man worketh*: Tho' 'tis no wonder such may be sorry, on the view of Death, when they see it's come to that. *Judas* was very sorry, and I doubt not the damn'd in Hell are sorry, for doing that which brought them there; and they may have some degree of the same sorrow a little before they turn off, when they see what's before them. The Terror which the sight of Death gives them, with the Terror and Consternation they are in, may very well bring Anguish, and strong Passions on them, and make them



them now, at last, sensible both of their Duty, and where they are going; tho' they wou'd not be sensible before. Death is a rough Monitor, and beats People into Tameness: What thanks to them for that? Or why shou'd they be so highly rewarded as with Heaven for that then. Alas! When they are in sight of Hell, 'tis too late to promise them Heaven; tho' they shou'd never so much desire it then. And whereas he says, *They might continue Wicked yet in their Sickness* 'tis scarce any have that impudence; but if they wou'd, they find they cannot follow their Debaucheries then, and whenever their Body is perhaps, more changed than their Mind, 'tis hard to steel their Faces then against God, when he is just giving them their Mitimus to Death and Hell: And I am sure the not fighting with God then, is a service little worthy of acceptance. If they *have a Disposition to do Well then* (as he says) that Disposition shou'd have been whilst the right use cou'd be made of it, and then 'twere something; but when the use of it is past, 'tis too late, as well as after they are Dead, as to Salvation; but that may still, even yet better their Condition, by mitigating their Punishment. I grant the Disposition is enough to save upon Baptismal Repentance.

The Scripture is always open to *true Repentance*, but I deny it can be true in wicked Christians, that continue so till Death's Sickness; if they die then, and have not their Life mercifully prolonged. And I deny that any sorrow or change of Mind, without a following good Life, can save a wicked Christian. Nor can I believe any such true and effectual Change, unto a new Creature, to be in him at all, on his Sickness, that had it not before; unless I see God gives him further Life to live well.

He asks about Restitution, in case of Injustice done, *Whether it be not true that in case a Man have no Power, no Restitution is necessary on his Death-Bed?* I Answer, That Restitution shou'd have been done while Life and Health gives us some Power to do it; which, in many Cases, Death's Sickness may as much disable us from

doing before Death, as after Death. But if he gives all he has to give then, 'tis all that God requires of him; but he shou'd have began some Satisfaction in time: *Agree with thine Adversary whilst in the way*, says Christ. When we are under Death's Arrest, we are deliver'd to the Judge: While we are in Health we are able to make some Satisfaction in many Cases, which we cannot do at Death's Sickness; and if we, by continuing obstinately Injurious till then, have put it out of our power then: Will not that perpetual Contempt be required at our hands? They that are Dead may say, If they had Power now they wou'd do it; but having no Power, why shou'd they be punished for not saying so, perhaps an hour before they dyed.

He asks, *Who knows the Temptations, Ignorance and Weakness of ill Livers; may not that be Infirmary in one, that is Presumption in another.* I Answer, I grant that, but still within the Class of such Sins only as are generally and properly but Sins of Infirmary; which yet may sometimes be Sins of Presumption in some People. But Adultery, Fornication, Drunkenness, Robbery, Stealing, and the like, cannot be Sins of Infirmary in any instructed grown Christian, whom only I call the Christians that are wicked Livers in Christianity unto Death.

He says, *We want our Servants Work, but God doth not want ours, but we want a holy Disposition: Why may not that be given us at the Eleventh Hour.* I Answer, God lays as much stress upon our Work, as if he wanted it: 'Tis certain we want it for our Salvation; wherefore we are Debtors (says the Apostle) *not to live after the Flesh.* — *Live unto the Lord.* — *Live unto God.* — *Walk in newness of Life.* — Now if God requires our Life and our Works, may we deal with him as we durst not with a meaner Master? Offer it now to thy Governour, *will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy Person saith the Lord of Hosts. Mal. 1. 8.*

As to the Eleventh Hour, to have the holy Disposition given us in: I deny that Hour in the Parable, to be the Hour of Death, among them that are Christians  
long

long before. The Parable relates evidently to the coming into the Christian Church, called *the Vineyard*; those that come to Baptism at the Eleventh Hour, tho' that were the last Hour of their Life; I meddle not with, so as to deny their Salvation. But if that Parable will be so Wrested then, to fit that Construction, it shou'd describe him that stood Idle to have been in the Vineyard before; and idle there till the Eleventh Hour; which is not the Case. Yet I say, If it will needs be made by some to relate (as it does not) to wicked Christians; even then the Eleventh Hour shou'd be the twelfth Part of their Life in Christianity. This, he says, *may by some be call'd a Jest: and that may not be the worst of it, for the Objection may be, that according to this, it were in vain to think of Repentance, if a Man have not a prospect of living six Years within two Months, which is the twelfth Part of a Man's ordinary Age of Seventy Years.* But I have declared that was not my sense of the Parable, and that it did not relate to that Business; but I used that, as *Argumentum ad hominem*, to him that wou'd draw the Parable that way; as being a necessary Consequence that wou'd then follow from it.

He says, *giving the Peace of the Church will not be thought by some so proper a sense of Absolution, as giving the Peace of God.* I Answer, the ancient Stile of being Absolved, especially after a Censure was *ad pacem Ecclesie recipi*, to be received to the peace of the Church; tho' I own that without the Peace of the Church, they will never have the Peace of God: For in this sense, whatsoever the Church binds shall be bound in Heaven; and what she looseth (so far still as she hath Power to loose) shall be loosed in Heaven. But to extend that Power to the pardoning of all Sins (even with respect of the guilt against God) by her Absolutions, especially to those that have been the wickedest livers in Christianity, even unto the Hour of Death; is what I cannot assent too; as being too much Power for me to own in any Mortals.

He asks, *Will I give Absolution (which is an assurance of Pardon) unto the wickedest Reprobates, if I suppose any to*

*be so at their Death*: I Answer, 'Tis an assurance of the Churches Pardon; and I may give that, with an assurance of God's Pardon, so far as concerns the Offences against the Church; but no farther can I assure it; unless I joyn with Popery in the Case. And it wou'd be a sad thought, that every Popish Priest cou'd by his Absolution to Morrow, fully Pardon in God's stead, him that shou'd Murder me and my Children to Night. In my Opinion, that Doctrine has been a great encourager of the Wickedness that abounds in the World: And therefore I must joyn with Dr. Hammond in that, whose way (he says) *some do not approve*: For I am sure many Pious Divines do approve it; and I am glad I have such to joyn with, in a Point I take to be of such infinite great Consequence.

He says, of my Exhortation to the Sick that have been Wicked, *some will think it a Confutation to all that went before, this being the common Opinion*. I Answer, I cannot see one word in it that contradicts any thing I said before: Neither does what I say here jump with the common Opinion: Which common Opinion is, that if God sees them sincere he will save them, tho' they dye then. But I say, He will either grant them longer time to live here; or if he do not, they must submit to his Will; and they shall not lose the benefit of all the good they can do now. I see not how this does Confute what I said before. All the good they can do now, will be infinitely recompensed no doubt, by the mitigation of their Punishment, tho' they shou'd miss Salvation.

IV. The next Sett of Objections I shall consider, is from one Mr. Keys, a great Disciple of Mr. Calvin's, as himself professed. This Gentleman took upon him to Write me a little Book of about Two or Three Sheets of Paper, of *Cursory Remarks*, as he call'd it; in Answer to that Section of mine, about the *Death-Bed Repentance*. To which I return'd him the Reply, which I here Publish; which gives all his Arguments in brief.

*About the Death-Bed Repentance.*

**T**HE Ingenious Gentleman that has Writ *some* *Cursory Remarks*, on that one Section of mine about Repentance, contain'd in my Answer to Mr. *Asgill*, has not given me the satisfaction of discovering any Error in it, by what he advances against it. I do not deny *the possibility of a Death-Bed Repentance*, which is all his Title asserts: But do allow it both possible to many; and beneficial to all, who have it any degree; and saving to all that before were no Christians; and do then receive Baptism upon it; or at least are desirous and willing to receive it, if it may be had. But what I Assert, is that no meer *Death-Bed Repentance* (that is such as had no other preceding Repentance) can possibly be effectual to the Salvation of any wicked liver in Christianity: Because I cannot conceive it possible for professors of Christianity to have any other terms of Salvation, than what God has laid down, and plainly reveal'd. Now if he had reveal'd to us such a Salvo or Exception, by any one Word, or so much as one Example of any wicked Liver among Christians so Saved, I wou'd yield the Cause. Surely one Example, at least, might be found in all the Scripture, if ever such a thing was done.

The Author of these Remarks, grants, *infinite Danger in it, unwarrantable Presumption, the greatest Improbability, extremely hopeless and deplorable*. So he is very near my Assertion: But yet he wou'd have *some Glimpse of a Possibility*. And why? To support (he says) *a Person in such a condition*. I suppose therefore 'tis his Charity sways him: But if Charity be rightly directed, it will be more concern'd for the many that are living, than for the one wicked Person so dying; whose embalming with such hopes then, may be fatally Infectious to the Souls of many Survivors: Whilst yet all our Charity  
in



in that kind could not alter his Condition ; nor wou'd it do him the least good to say more to him on that occasion, than I have allowed in Number 22 of that Section.

Now it is some Glimpse he wou'd have of a Possibility ; but I love not to deal with Glimpses, I am for down right Demonstration or Proofs of the Possibility contested ; 'tis to the Affirmative and not the Negative infallible Proofs shou'd be required : The Non-possibility on my side, being the Negative, 'tis enough to have probable Arguments for that, till the contrary Affirmative be demonstrated by evident Proofs. What Proofs he brings for it, as well as his Answers to my Arguments, I shall here briefly consider : But to prevent Mistakes, I must caution, that by the *Death-Bed Repentance* in this Controversy, I do not mean that of a Chronical or long lingring Sickness, of dubious Issue perhaps, and to which Death may at last be consequent. But when an evident, hopeless, violent Distemper, or what Physitians call an accute Disease is on them, and Death soon succeeds ; suppose it be a Week, Fortnight, or longer ; for so I often restrain it, by saying, when a Man has spent all his Life in Wickedness, has no longer time to live, is tied to his Death-Bed, cannot practice the works of Vertue, but can only exercise some Sorrow with poor Peccavi's, or (as I sometimes call it) a little Death-Bed Groaning.

Now let us see what Reasons he gives for the possibility of Salvation in this Case : For as to his *improbability, hopelesness, and deplorableness*, I grant they may be even in the other Cases of Chronical Distempers, that end in Death : But the *impossibility* I maintain only in this Case ; and do think still that I have very good Reason so to do.

1. He says, *It is a very plain and undeniable Point of Theology in Calvin's Institutions, that we are justified by Faith alone : And that in such a Sense, that good Works are not at all Ingredients in our Justification.* This is Calvinistical Theology I know ; and if this does not weaken the necessity of good Works (which he disavows) I know not what

does.

does. But I suppose he wou'd besides ground it on the XIth Article of the Church of *England*. Yet I deny that Article proves it in his Sense. If the word *alone* or *only* be understood in opposition to Judaical Works, or any foregoing Works of ours before Faith; or in opposition to the Merits of any other; or Faith in any other Saviour; or any other method of Salvation, Jewishly, Paganly, or Turkishly Moral, how precise soever; I then grant it. But if *only* be taken in opposition to the Works of Christian righteousness, wrought in and through the faith of Christ; then I utterly deny his Theological Point: And I think he overthroweth it himself, by what he grants; that *it is indeed, but very rare any Person is Saved by a solitary Faith*: But I say, If good Works are not at all Ingredients (as he says they are not) in any ones Justification, or Salvation, (which he supposes inseparable) then no one can be Saved *otherwise* than by solitary Faith: And then it is not rare, but all that are Saved must be so Saved.

But before I proceed further, because he thinks to knock me down with *Calvin's* Authority, I must make a little Digression here, to tell him, what we of the Church of *England* do think of Mr. *Calvin*: We are loath to deny any one their due Praise, in what is Praiseworthy. And we grant, That French Minister, Mr. *Calvin*, was (as the judicious *Hooker* own'd him) the wisest Minister that Church then had. He was, no doubt, a very polite Latinist, and a very ingenious politick Man: And we know that as the Case stood with him in *Geneva*, he managed his Part artificially enough, for the Settlement of a Reformation from Popery in that City; by which he got no small Fame. But his way in that Work was never admitted in *England*; for which he was very Angry at us; and has revenged it sufficiently upon us since: As he was also Angry at the Lutheran Churches, who kept their Episcopacy, as we did. The first foundation pretended for his way of Reforming without Bishops, was the necessity of their Circumstances in *Geneva*, who cou'd not then have Bishops. The learn'd Mr. *Hooker* in the Preface to his

*Ecclesi-*

*Ecclesiastical Polity*, may satisfy the English Reader with the History of that at large ; and how he was glad to beg the Suffrage of the four Helvetian Churches that were Episcopal Protestant Churches, to approve his way then, for the necessity they were in ; assuring them privately, that Popery wou'd else speedily get in again, if those Churches, to which the People of *Geneva* had Appeal'd, did not approve of his new invented Discipline immediately, to quiet the People : And those Bishops comply'd with him in that, through Charity. But after his Model was firmly settled, he long'd to have all other Churches like his, that he might pass for the chief Father of all the Reformation.

He was, indeed, the first that for young Protestant Scholars, writ a Systematical ( I had like to say Schismatical ) Abridgment of Theology, call'd his *Institutions* ; where there lay an undiscern'd Snake in the Grass. For he Vying with the Episcopal Churches for Purity, and desiring to draw their Disciples from them into his own Model, he knew if the Contest were barely about Episcopacy alone, he wou'd be worsted by all Antiquity : And therefore to have something to draw People to his Way, he Writes a fine new Scheme of Theology, pretendedly for Protestant young Students in general ; which he knew in time, if universally follow'd, wou'd supplant the old way ; and then the old Form of Church Government too, wou'd be like to drop with the old Doctrine at last : And mean while there wou'd be something to Wrangle about ; and constant Fuel for Contention with the Episcopal Churches, who, he knew, wou'd always encline to the old Theory of Practical Divinity. This undiscerned Design was at last found to obtain much of it's end : For his *Institutions*, by reason of the fineness of the Latin, and as being the shortest way to Initiate young Students in the knowledge of Divinity, was very much read in all places ; as being a briefer way to set up for Preaching by the help of such small Systems, than beginning at the right end or fountain Head, by reading of ancient Fathers, Councils, Cannons, School-men, and

and Histories ; which wou'd be very tedious. His new Principles therefore were imbib'd far and near, and admir'd among many of our own too ; especially on our Persecution, in the Popish Queen *Mary's* Days, when many fled out of *England* to *Geneva* for Shelter : And coming home again when the Persecution was over, in about four Years ; they brought such Notions with them from *Mr. Calvin*, as laid the Seeds of all that has troubled the Church of *England*, both in Queen *Elizabeth's* Days, and ever since. But whatever became of his Discipline, his Systematical Doctrine was much swallow'd ; till ancient Learning began to revive and flourish in our Universities. Then by degrees his fine-spun Subtilties began to decay : And within this Age or two past, have been quite exploded, by all the eminentest Doctors of the Church of *England*. And all the Episcopal Protestant Churches in Christendom have served him much the same way ; and some of them worse, in refusing Communion with his Disciples. And that which the Calvinists rail at, by the name of *Arminianism*, about Free-will, carries the Cause against them in all Churches that have Bishops ; nay and among some that are honest Presbyterians too.

Now if my Answerer thinks to run me down with the Name of *Mr. Calvin*, I must stop him, with a, *non quis, sed quid*, not who, but what. 'Tis true, If the present Doctors, Bishops and Rulers of mine own Church, do tell me a thing, I must then consider the *Quis*, who it is that speaks it ; their Authority over me obliges me so to do. But when a Foreigner is brought against me, I shall not own his Authority, but only examine the Truth of what he says. And this is my Case with *Mr. Keys*: Let him prove the Truth of what *Mr. Calvin* says, and Vindicate him and his Doctrine, as well as he can : And so I will joyn Issue with him, and go on. I confess, *Mr. Calvin's* spoiling the old Divinity with his new Impositions in Theology, which Novelties, he and his Disciples, call the only Orthodoxy, has forced me to almost double the Work I shou'd otherwise have needed, in this little Book : Which redi-

diouſneſs on thoſe Heads, I hope the Reader will excuse, conſidering the ſort of People I have to deal with.

To proceed therefore ; I own, that *moment of Juſtification* he ſpeaks of, is another Point of Calviniſtical Theology, which we deny to be done in a Moment, among wicked Chriſtians. And we believe a Man may on his good Life in the faith of Chriſt, be in a ſtate of Grace or Salvation (if you'll call that a State of Juſtification) and may fall from it again on his after bad Life. The Calvinian Scheme has, indeed, a concatenation of Errors in it ; ſome of which are the foundation of Antinomianism, the abſolute, unconditional, irreſpective decrees of Election to Heaven, and Reprobation to Hell ; the effectiveness of Grace alone, without our cooperating in the leaſt ; the inſtantly or ſuddenly perfecting its Work in a Moment ; the irreſiſtibility of Grace ; the indefectibility of it, or no falling from Grace : Theſe are all but the Links of one Chain, made up for a By-end, and to promote a new Church-Model. And if this Gentleman has caſt away the head Link of unconditional, abſolute decrees of Salvation, (as I find he has, in another Writing of his) ſo he ſhou'd the reſt too.

Now, beſides what I have ſaid of Faith, on the one hand, that it cannot juſtify Chriſtians without works of Chriſtian Righteouſneſs: I deny alſo on the other hand, that Salvation is infallibly conſequent to every Juſtification ; eſpecially that which is ſaid to be done by Faith only : For there is a Juſtification upon firſt Believing, by thoſe that were no Chriſtians before (and that is the ſort the Scripture generally means) many of whom do yet never attain Salvation.

He ſeems to ſuppoſe, that *the old Sinner, tho' in Health, muſt certainly have provoked God more than younger Men ; tho' ſuch younger were even on their Death-Bed* : Which is very precarious ; for a younger Man may have more obſtinately reſiſted the Spirit, fruſtrated greater Providences, and more provoked God, than even the older Man of twice ſo long a Life had done : And where

God



God sees fit to put an end to the Day of Grace, how soon soever that be; who can say but that God would his Obstinacy greater than the old Man's is yet, that seems still so great a Sinner: Nor do I allow an undoubted possibility to every old Man that is yet in Health, for some may be Reprobated before they are in their last Sickness.

It is strange to me, that he shou'd reckon a *Thought*, a *Desire*, or even *Faith* it self, to be good Works, in the Scripture Sense, that contradistinguishes good Works to that Notion of Faith he insists on. And besides, the Scripture never makes Faith (as it is saving) to be God's work alone without any of our cooperating: Nor ever affirms that *good Works* are not at all *Ingredients* in our *Justification*. I wish he wou'd please to read Dr. Hammond's Practical Catichism, and his Annotations on those Scriptures he produces, viz. Rom. 3. 24. 28. Eph. 2. 8, 9. Rom. 5. 1. or (for more plainness) Dr. Whitby's late Paraphrase and Annotations; especially his Preface to the Epistle to the *Galatians*, where he will find himself very fully and largely Answer'd, about Faith and Justification. And that he wou'd please to read my poor Notions about the true saving Faith, for Seven Pages, from the end of the Fifteenth Page of that Answer to Mr. Apgill; which I suppose he has not read, or else he wou'd have found it necessary to Answer that, before he cou'd lay a solid Foundation to build this sort of Argument on, against me.

2. His next is bottom'd on the same sort of Mistake, and his Scripture Examples are not on a *Death-Bed Repentance*. The Justifying a Sinner (which means only the Pardon of his past Sins) always implies a condition of future Amendment, by sincere honesty of Life in vertuous Practice: This if he have no time to perform, yet if it be his first coming to the faith of Christ, he may for that Reason be accepted for that time, without the good Life; and is expressly promised Pardon only upon penitential Believing and Baptising; *those days of Ignorance God winked at*. But shall this be the Case again, upon wilful Contumacy against such for-

mer

mer Mercies ? Shall Domestick Rebels be treated with as honourable Terms as Forreign Enemies ? To such there is no second Promise made, in all the Scripture, but only upon their actual living a good Life, by a timely Repentance ; there's no more accepting the Will for the Deed then, as was done before : And it is cruelly grating, and runs against the grain of Honesty, to assert what he does, *that the Faith to which Salvation is always given, is as good, (or in his Words) as true and real in it self, (that is, as saving) without good Life, as with it.* The Lord forbid it me, that I shou'd give such Advantage to those that are without, and such Hopes to those wicked Ones that are within the Pales of Christianity. According to this Doctrine it is, that we have seen a bold Author affirm in Print *that no Man can be wrong in his Morals, that is but right in his Faith ; for all is set to right in him, as an Incident to his Faith.* — And therefore (says he) *God never objects a Man's own personal Sins to him in the day of his Faith ; and till I am more Sinful than Christ was Holy, my Sins are no Objection against my Faith. And because in him is all my hope, I care not almost what I am myself.* And truly the Logick of his Conclusion is right (and I wou'd be of his mind too) if his Premisses were true ; which do suppose that even to wicked Christians, *Faith may be as saving without good Life as with it ;* which is the thing my Answerer here, unwarily Asserts. We own our best Works can merit nothing of God, either *excongruo*, or *condigno*, as the Schools speak. When we have done all, we are but unprofitable Servants to God : But surely it will not be unprofitable to our selves ; for *those are the things (says the Apostle) that are good and profitable unto Men.* Tit. 3. 8. *And if ye do these things ye shall never fall.* 2 Pet. 1. 10. Now tho' good Works be not Meritorious (for nothing is so in us, not even Faith nor Repentance in any sense) yet it's certain good Works are absolutely and essentially necessary to compleat, make up, or perfect, that second sort of Repentance God requires from lapsed Christians, after Baptism, (tho' not so to the first sort before

before Baptism) wicked Christians cannot be otherwise Entitled to the Merits of Christ, nor consequently to Salvation ; of which a good Life through Faith, is (tho' not the *Cause Effectiva*, yet) the *conditio sine qua non*, an absolute Condition, without which, we shall not be Saved ; and so must be essentially necessary to that Repentance of wicked Christians, which through mercy obtains Salvation.

3. What has been already said, Answers his 3d. Paragraph too. If *the Man* he supposes this day Converted, were in a state of Infidelity, that is, in no profession of Christianity before, he is safe, if Baptized, tho' he dyed the next minute : But if he has been a wicked Christian, not so fast then, a true Conversion of such is not so soon over, *Conversio hujus modi non fit in instanti*. Yet he will not be so deeply damn'd, as if he had never made any offer at Repentance at all. But to give imediate Salvation to him, upon one days pretence to Conversion, is a much harder line indeed, than denying the possibility of it. Hard Lines, he says, shall a Believer have the recompense of an Infidel, a Penitent, of a Man harden'd in his Sins? Yes, why not? If this Believer has persevered in a wicked Life in spite of his Christianity, which he always profess'd and was Baptized in the Faith of : And if this pretended Penitent has liv'd harden'd in his Sins all along, till Death came on him, and has no time now to work in Christ's Vineyard. But it is a harder Question I have to ask ; Shall a wicked Christian, so living till the Day of his Death, have the recompense of a righteous, or vertuous and pious Christian Liver? A merciful seeming Doctrine indeed, to the wicked, but most unmerciful to the foundation of Vertue ; and has undoubtedly murder'd many Souls, that but for this very Expectation, might have more timely turn'd to a good Life, and so have escaped the Wrath to come. For, alas ! A vertuous Life is a most difficult Task to the most of wicked Christians, especially the more they have been accustomed to the contrary : And therefore will never be perform'd

H

by

by them, whilst they can think of a possibility of any other way to escape without it. To clear this more fully, observe that I do not positively affirm, that it is utterly impossible for a true change of Mind to *begin at such a time*; but that if it have not time to change the Life practically, in Fact, as well as in Speculation, 'tis impossible it shou'd then be *a true thorough change to Salvation*; (understanding me right still of a wicked lapsed Christian, not of a new Convert to Christianity) for a saving Change of such, must be a Change of Life, or else the Change is not finished.

And whereas, I suppose that if God saw the Death-Bed Sinners Resolution and Change so sincere, that it wou'd certainly produce a good Life, he wou'd then grant him the necessary time to perform it, by allowing further Life for the Purpose: 'Tis demanded *what Text of Scripture I ground that on*. I named three Texts there, in Number 19 and I may indeed ground it upon all the Texts that assert the Mercy and Goodness of God. For if God be very desirous that all Men shou'd be saved, 1 Tim. 2. 4. and 1 Pet. 3. 9. And swears it *as he lives*, Ezek. 33. 14. and Chap. 18. 31. And so passionately Expostulates with us about it, and presses us to it, that to such good Life we shou'd turn and live. And on the other hand, to all those that will not turn to a good Life, he has denounced eternal Death irreversibly, without exception; he has *Sworn in his wrath that they shall not enter into his rest*: And if Christ has made the Tenure of his whole Gospel, and all the new Testament, to declare to all, a final retribution of good Rewards to good Livers, through faith in him; and evil Rewards to evil Livers, unless at least they timely amend, so as to be reckon'd at last, by a merciful computation, amongst the good Livers: As the Labourer that wrought but one Hour of the Day, was accepted, among them that wrought all the Day, altho he but a twelfth Part of the Day: Now this being so, if it be possible that God sees a poor Sinner

in

in his Sickness so truly Changed, and sincerely Resolved, that wou'd certainly live that good Life necessary to Salvation, if he had the least time for it; and without a good Life he must be lost, (there's Scripture enough for that) ought we not to suppose that the merciful good God wou'd then give him the time necessary, 'tis true he is not bound in Justice to it, because he gave him time enough before: But the greatness of his mercy is such, that he will not suffer that to be lost, which might certainly be saved with so small an addition to his Life.

The greatest Rub against this in some Peoples Thoughts, is the unreasonableness they apprehend in granting *such a Miracle*, as they call it: But do we not see as great Miracles every Day? Does not God daily infuse Grace, and cannot he as well infuse a Thought? What shou'd be done then *viz.* to heal the Sick? Though God leaves ordinary Events to follow the course of their natural Causes, yet does he not keep to himself an over-ruling Providence in extraordinary Cases? Is the Life and weightiest Affairs of Humane Creatures of no value to him? Does not God preside over them? Has he left the whole World to blind Chance? I think our Glorious King *William's* Maxim was not absurd, that every Bullet had it's Commission; at least I am sure many of them have. Is it not God that often makes Life long or short? Does he not by those natural Agents and Instruments that he insensibly manages, oftentimes bring things to pass for our particular Good, by ways that we can give as little account of, as of his more apparent Miracles? Was there not a whole Series of Providence in every step of our late Revolution, and in our particular Preservation and Deliverances in *Ireland*? Have not even particular Men, (as well as Communities) frequent Experience of his providential Mercy? Why else do we pray for them, and expect them? Is not God the Lord of Life and Death, as well as of all things else? Is it not he that prolongeth our Days, and often causeth *that the wicked Live*



*not out half their Days? Through him have we been holden up ever since we were Born? As the Psalmist says. Is it not as great a Miracle to protect and preserve so many Children through all their impotent Age, nay to preserve but one to such an Age, (suppose the dying Sinner himself) as great a Miracle, I say, as to lengthen it a little now, for so great an end as the Salvation of his Soul; when that Salvation cannot otherwise be done, according to the terms of the Gospel, nor according to God's inviolable Sanction and Laws, and his revealed Will, and express Covenants; all which he must alter, and break through, to save that Sinner otherwise; whom he might bring in regularly, by adding a little more time to his Life; which sometimes we believe even a Mountebank may hap to do (when the Scale of Life and Death hangs even) by one Grain or two of a natural Drug, which luckily nicks the Distemper. Is this so great a Miracle to believe of God; that we can by no means swallow it, least it shou'd constrain us to grant a total Violence to the Laws of Nature? When this may be done perhaps by a little suggestion into the mind of a Physician, or even of an old Women, or other By-standers, who have often done the work, where Physicians Skill has been baffled; and that we may suppose done by a small providential influence, or directing to the right use even of some natural means. I am ashamed to see this so much cavill'd at by Christians, that believe a Providence, and that pray often to God themselves, for as great Matters, as even for the prolongation or sparing of their own Lives, especially when they think them in any danger, and usually send to Church to be pray'd for: Wou'd they have God do a Miracle then?*

They that make such an Out-cry against this great pretended Miracle, which they run away from the belief of, I suppose tho' some of them pretend to much reading, they never did read Dr. *Sherlock* on Providence; or if they did, they disbelieve him, and perhaps they disbelieve our Saviour too, when he says,  
There

There does not a Sparrow fall to the Ground without the permission of God : much less can a Man dye without God's Permission. And what if God stops a while his ordinary Permission of a Man's Death or Dissolution, in such an extraordinary Case, as when the Salvation of his Soul depends on it ? That precious Soul that Christ died for, when it's truly changed and sincerely willing to accept the terms of Christ's Redemption, shall it be eternally lost, for want of a very little prolongation of the Life of the Body to perform those terms in ? When as its present Life cannot end, unless God continues his Permission that it shou'd end. 'Tis but stopping his Permit a while, as to that particular, and then the poor Creature so long lives. Perhaps there are every Day and every Hour as great Miracles as this in the World : Even a vertuous Christian's Life may be prolong'd by Prayers ; but God is not under so great Obligations of Mercy in this Case, as in the other ; because the vertuous Christian's Salvation is secure already, and he may go to Heaven without further prolongation of his bodily Life : And so God may permit Death to seize him, as being now ripe for Happiness. Neither can the wicked Man himself be seized by Death till God permits. We see many Causes that wou'd have their natural Effects, if God's Permit concur'd ; but we see how often they fail, and are strangely disappointed : And why ? But because God did not permit it. In short, The whole World is all Miracle like this, and so is every Man's Life that comes into it.

4. His Fourth Paragraph seems to insinuate, as if *no Person could or can be Reprobated, or past possibility of Salvation, even at their Death's Sicknes, who are not such Nero's in Sin, as to exceed the deepest and greatest that can well be imagined ; even of those who Crucified our Saviour and imbrewed their Hands in his Innocent Blood : And that because he prayed for them in general. But I say, That was as an Expression of his Charity, exemplifying to us that precept of Praying for our Enemies ; and other great Reasons might be given for that : But I leave it*

## 84 The Death-Bed Repentance

to himself to consider the dire Consequences of this ; and what influence it may have upon those who are not yet *such Nero's* (as he calls them) and so may think themselves still at a remote distance from that danger.

5. Here he urges *experiences of what Ministers have often found in their Death-Bed Patients.* But sure no Experience can prove one of them Saved : And consequently the possibility remains unproved, till one Instance can be evidenced, or one Scripture Example, or Assertion produced for it. *They have been brought to a very sensible change,* he says. Alas, so have they seem'd to be, who after their Health return'd, have shewn themselves still the same they were of old, and as wicked as ever. When Death seems to knock at the Door, and an ominous Disease has destroyed natures Strength, the Body nauseates the very remembrance of its past Pleasures ; the lusts of the Flesh, the lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life, have then lost all their Charms to them, and appear in their true Colours, and discover all the Nakedness and Loathsomeness of their vile Natures. Then the Man hates and abhors them dreadfully for that time ; and not only makes others believe so, but believes it himself ; he accuses and condemns himself with the greatest vehemence for his past Mad-ness, and makes the solemnest Vows, what good Things he'll do if he Recover. He Prays, Believes, Repents, speaks Holy Things, and is just like a Saint. Yet in the greatest Pretenders to all this, it has by sad Experience been proved, that on the returning of Health, they have been found the same Men they were before their Sickness ; in so much, that the most Pious and Excellent Doctor *Horneck* (who was one of the greatest Visitors of sick Bodies in *London*) averr'd to the Honourable Sir *Robert King*, as appears by one of his Letters to me, which I have under his Hand to shew : Doctor *Horneck*, I say, averr'd, upon the Question put to him, that in all his Practice he never found one wicked Person of a meer Sick-Bed-Penitent, that ever made good their then Pretences to true Repentance, upon their perfect Recovery. Here is Experience now with a witness.

What

What my Answerer speaks of the late Earl of Rochester, has no such certainty; and besides, it comes not fully under my Case: For he was three Quarters of a Year Sick, from October, when Dr. Burnet first visited him, till the end of July following; and sometimes pretty well recovered; in so much that thinking himself well ~~and~~ he rode one journey Post, about two Months before he Died: So that Dr. Burnet cou'd not be sure (having not seen him for several Months before) but that his Repentance (if it was true) was settled before his last mortal Fit, which that journey brought on him; nor does he affirm the contrary.

6. To his Question, *whether a Person that has repented and turned from his Wickedness in his Health, and shou'd come to a Death-Bed about two Months after, be in a State of Salvation or no?* I Answer, That does not come under the Case; and I may grant a possibility there, without hurting my cause. But yet that is a Question which neither he nor I can Answer. How long or how short a time in a good Life (that is in the moral duties of Christian Righteousness, in doing practical Vertues, avoiding Sin and denying Vices, for Christ's sake, and thro' faith in him) how long or short a time of doing thus, God will accept of, from any particular Man in his mercy to preponderate his past ill Life, no Creature can tell: For God's weights are not like ours: But to say he will accept of, or require, none at all (as my Death-Bed Case must imply) and that from lapsed, and perhaps the wickedest Christians, is such a hard presumption as I cannot yield a possibility of Truth to; if ever I expect to defend Christianity with effect, and vindicate the Truth and Justice of God's reveal'd Will, and his declared Method of Salvation and Damnation. As we find (to point at some few of many places) *Matt. 7. 21. Luke 10. 25. 28. Rom. 2. 6, 7, 8, &c. 2 Pet. 1. 5. 11. 1 Cor. 3. 8. 2 Cor. 5. 10. Rev. 22. 12. 14. &c.*

But what if some People wou'd think that perhaps two Months in Health it self, were not long enough to live a good Life, nay, and impossible to be accepted,

of such Christians as had spent a long life in Wickedness? All that wou'd follow from it were, that they shou'd take the more care to begin speedily, because they know not how short their time is. They can never be too sure of their Salvation, and as there are degrees of Glory, so the sooner they begin the greater is their Reward. Besides, that continuance in Sin still hardens them more and more, and makes their true change more difficult; till it may in time become impracticable: *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots,* (says God by the Prophet) *then may ye also do Good that are accustomed to do Evil.* Jer. 13. 23. And above all customs else, what is a custom till Death? Surely then 'tis impossible to learn to do well; to learn customs so contrary to the former, if they have not time to learn at all: Let them try whether they can learn Greek, or Hebrew, or any Trade whatsoever then. And undoubtedly let Repentance be never so easie to learn, there is to be supposed a vast difference between that which is founded on choice, and that which is founded on a sudden fright and prospect of Death, between that which through the bare assistance of Grace, is founded on Reason and Consideration, *because he considereth and turneth,* &c. Ezek. 18. 28. Even whilst he is able still with pleasure to follow his sinful Courses *qui penitet dum peccare potest,* says St. Augustin. Between that I say, and the Repentance which is founded on such a violent terror of Death, as without Election of the Will, might force any one to stop his ill Courses, and reflect on his present Danger with dreadful horror, and remorse of Conscience.

7. Here from all he has thus offer'd, he sums up a Scheme which is greivously erroneous, and the very Dregs of Antinomianism: To this sense or purpose, that *he that had no Righteousness of his own doing* (but perhaps the wickedest Abuser of his Christian Profession all his Life) *may lay hold on Christ's Righteousness* (which must be with impious Presumption sure) *and make it his own; without the sinful Appendages of his own imperfect*



*imperfect Works.* Now if all our best Works of good Life be sinful Appendages, and we are commanded to avoid all Sins, we shou'd indeed better be without all works of good Life than have them. Our Righteousness, it's true, may well appear as *filthy Rags* compared to Christ's; but yet dirty Cloathing it self, is not Nakedness: And 'tis as great a contradiction to say Righteousness is Sin, or good Works done through faith in Christ are sinful, as to say Cloathing (tho mean or dirty) is Nakedness: Here again consider, whether this does not weaken the necessity of good Works, which he declares *he wou'd by no means do.* But I think (and so will many Thousands more) that there is no necessity of the sinful Practice or sinful Appendages of good Works, where we may let them alone, and be sooner justified without them; as without doubt we shall, if they be sinful; tho you call them *good Works*, perhaps, by the same figure as we call a Drunkard a *good Fellow*: For you must mean them only to be *good sinful Works*, that is, *righteous Wickedness.* I desire him to shew one place of Scripture if he can (for I am pretty sure there is none) that asserts Christ's Righteousness shall thus be imputed to wicked Christians, that have none of their own.

To unravel fully this false Scheme of Theology wou'd be too tedious here: I refer him therefore to the Books I have already recommended to his perusal, as I might to almost all of our late learn'd Divines; that since this new Divinity began, have written purposely against it; and do baffle clearly these horrible Tenents: Which Authors I believe have been out of the road of those Men that have initiated my Answerer; whom I yet suppose too honest to be their Disciple as soon as he shall get their Documents in a true light. I wish also he wou'd read Dr. *Patrick's* Parable of the Pilgrim, and Dr. *Burnet* on the thirty Nine Articles, to set him fully in the right way. The Question now is, Whether Christians that are finally justified to Salvation, have that justification given them on the sole righteousness of Christ alone imputed to them,  
without

## 88 The Death-Bed Repentance

without any of their own doing; or else in conjunction with their own? He says, *It is the former way, at least sometimes.* But if it be at any time, it must be always, according to his Scheme; and yet he owns that so rarely done, that *it is vouchsafed perhaps scarcely to one in many Thousands.* What, is it but that one we contend for at last? And how can we tell that one it self has that extraordinary favour given him more than the rest; who even at his Death had no good Life, or good Works of his own, to concur in his Justification? Contrary wise I have reason to believe, if that one of those many thousands of Death-Bed Penitents (for it is of them only we dispute) have this favour; all the rest will have it. For supposing God to be no respecter of Persons; and setting aside absolute unconditionable Predestination (which this Author himself abhors, and I have writ a small Book on it already) or if that it self were allowed, it wou'd not serve his purpose; seeing the means, that is, a good Life must be predestinated as well as the end: But setting that here aside, I say, and supposing God to be *no respecter of Persons*, I see nothing that can hinder any of the rest of the dying thousands from having it (as well as that one) that are impudent enough to endeavour robbing Christ's Righteousness to themselves: 'Tis but *laying hold on it, closing up with it, leaning, and rolling upon Christ* (as the Phrases go) and the Work is done: And who cannot do this as well as another? Perhaps every one has not ability to Cant or Whine as well as another; or perhaps cannot speak as charmingly and wittily as a Play-Actor can, when he puts on a guise of Religion; that's no matter, let him be but bold enough to lay fast hold on Christ, right or wrong, and there's an end. How then can this sort of Doctrine have any effect to deter wicked Christians sufficiently (as my Answerer seems to think) from trusting to a Death-Bed Repentance. But he insinuates that *if nothing will prevail with some, but telling them a meer Death-Bed Repentance cannot possibly be saving, then telling them of a sooner impossibility, after twenty or*

thirti  
then  
to f  
we  
mo  
8  
inter  
fore,  
saw  
the  
mul  
the  
is)  
him  
F  
godl  
Salv  
he p  
Rep  
wor  
Rep  
can  
Jud  
row  
rem  
as i  
He  
He  
rag  
tho  
unf  
But  
he  
do,  
tha  
pen  
this  
not  
me

thirty

*thirty Years sinning will terrifie them more.* And what then? Must we not tell what severe Truths we can, to stop them from Wickedness, because Lies (which we cannot or must not tell) wou'd frighten them more?

8. Here he makes a wrong Inference, that *because intention or full purpose of Sin might damn a Man, therefore, contrarium lege, the like intention of Vertue may save him.* But his *lex contrariorum* will not do there; the reason is, both sides are not alike; because there must go much more to the saving a Man, than to the damning him: One Sin (as the wicked intention is) may damn him; but one Vertue will not save him; and that good intention is but one Vertue.

He speaks of *godly Sorrow*, as if it were all in all. *godly Sorrow*, says the Apostle, *worketh Repentance to Salvation not to be repented of*, 2. Cor. 7. 10. Whereby he plainly distinguishes between the Sorrow, and the Repentance, the one is not the other, but the one worketh the other, the *godly Sorrow* worketh the Repentance: But if it has not time to do it, it cannot perform that: And how does he know but *Judas* had *godly Sorrow*? Which I take every Sorrow to be, that brings God to our Thoughts, and remorse for our Sins; though perhaps not so sincere as it shou'd be: And that sometimes a Man's own Heart cannot tell, nor any but God that searches the Heart. Yet the lowest degree of it is to be encouraged by us in all, by calling it *godly Sorrow*, tho' it shou'd after prove but an imperfect Branch of it, or unsincere, (which is more than we can tell the while.) But *Judas* had such Sorrow, he spoke *godly Things*, he made confession, even where it was dangerous to do, by laying Murder to his Rulers, to their Face, that he had *betrayed to them the innocent Blood*; he repented, and made what Restitution he cou'd: Surely this was a sort of *godly Sorrow*, and yet it cou'd not save him. This I think is enough to that Argument he has filled above two Pages with.

## 108 The Death-Bed Repentance

9. Here because *no one can tell in what day, or time, or hour, a Sinner is Reprobated*, he would infer it presumptuous to say, *the Death-Bed is ordinarily a time for it*: But tho' we know not when, yet I say it must be done sometime or other. And the very words preceding those he quotes of mine in page thirty Nine Numb. 6. do run thus, *Now because all that fits us either for Salvation or Damnation must be transacted in this Life, and consequently none are Reprobated after Death; therefore it must be sometime before their Death, and so at the latest, for certain it must be on their Death-Bed or last Sickness; for if it be not then, it will never be.* And now what matter is it, what Minute that happens in?

That God might make some Person an Object of extraordinary Mercy; who would deny? But is not that very easily done by allowing him a little longer time to live? He hints here again at the same thoughts he set down before in Number 1. *that some Dying may not be so wicked as others in Health; and that I have answered already, at the same place, Number the First.*

10. Here he asks, about the first branch of Repentance, *what if he be poor, and cannot make Restitution?* I Answer, If he gives all he has, he has done it to his utmost Power, and that's all I require, and all God will require, in that Point, whether he Live or Die. To the Second, of rooting out evil Habits, *a Man that is a wicked Christian may be sanctified, he supposes on his Death-Bed, that never was so before*: But that's the thing I deny, and he does not yet prove; and I am sure never will: For there can to such, be no Sanctification antecedent to their good Life. To the third Point about habit of Vertue, he says, *they are all supernaturally infused, without our doing them.* As to the grace that assists, I confess Infusion; but I deny the acts are infused: And there never was a habit which was not first in Act, nor without repetition of Acts, which is as true in Vertue, as in Vice, and in all other things. Fourthly, About finishing, a good Course fighting a good Fight, called also a Labour, a Race,

a Warfare : 'Tis surely ridiculous what he proposes, *that all this* may be both begun, and ended, and more briskly and strenuously perform'd on the Death-Bed : As if all their foregoing Life, and Christian Baptism too, had been given them for nothing, unless it were to serve Sin, or to demonstrate that Life cou'd not do the work of Salvation so well as Death ; or that after the Devil had all Life's Endeavours, God wou'd be content with Death's Services ; or in a homely Expression, which I have somewhere read, After the Devil had sucked the Marrow out, God wou'd take the empty Bones. To the Fifth Point he says, *all the Graces of Faith, Hope, Self-denial, may be exercised in an instant.* This is the good old Antinomian way ~~of~~ Still, but without Proof ; and I deny every Sentence he offers on it. To the Sixth, About giving good Example contrary to their former bad ones, he says, *That may be done by others* : Which is something like the Popish Notion of Prayers, that another taking their Beads in Hand may do it for them. There may be more necessity for the future good Example of him that has given a very bad one before, than perhaps he is aware of. The Blood of Souls is dreadful, and they that have perished by our Example will lie heavy on us. A wicked Man that has been looked on for a knowing, leading, sagacious Person, or one that can otherwise influence People, they'll sooner follow his Example than any others : And all his Admonitions will signifie little, till he has proved his Doctrine by his own Practice : And he can hardly *be placed so remote then by Providence* ; (as our Author supposes) but that his Example will come to their hearing at least. But if not, yet still by his good Example, he may convert others where he is, instead of those he has lost, or cannot reach : And 'tis most certain, Example prevails more than Precept. We may be sure the Doctrine and Admonition of Christ himself had not prevailed so much without his Example.

11. Here he affirms, that *Christ having done the whole of a good Life for that wicked Death-Bed Sinner in his stead,*



## 92 The Death-Bed Repentance

*saed, it will be entirely imputed to him as if he had done it himself in his own Person.* But he knows I hope by this time, that I will utterly deny that Christ's Righteousness will ever be so imputed to such wicked Christians, without any of their own; which wou'd perhaps our do for mischeivousness of Consequence, the Popish Imputation of the Merits of Saints and Masses. One of the worst Objections Popery lies obnoxious to, is the giving hopes of Salvation in a bad Life: And I fear this Calvinian and Antinomian Scheme, will deserve to be called but another sort of Popery in a new Dress. I am sure it has given Popery a greater Harvest among Protestants, than ever it cou'd otherwise had.

I think I have left nothing now in his Paper Unanswered: And I do confess I shou'd have Reply'd a great deal more Amply but that I studied Brevity; and much more Tartly, but that I have a great respect for his pious Inclinations, and good Character. And I hope when he has read this, he will please once more to read over that Section, with second Thoughts: And consult also those better Books I have named to him, withal, to consider in God's Name, which of those two is the honestest Doctrine, which Honesty (where Scripture is disputable) is the only infallible Criterion to try the Truth of any Doctrine by: For Scripture rightly understood, can never be against the side of Honesty. And why shou'd any one stickle so much for the possibility of such a meer *Death-Bed's Repentance* bringing certain Salvation to wicked Christians? Where's the use of it? What necessity to uphold it? *Cui bono*? What good can it do? I have known it do a great deal of mischief: Besides, highly encouraging the Popish Dependency on the last cast, *in articulo mortis*. We shou'd have a just abhorrence of any thing that tends to enervate the absolute indispensable necessity of giving at least some part of ones Life to God, by vertuous Practice. The Lord give us grace to do it timely.

Thus

Thus I have done with this Reply to Mr. Keys; on which he sent me one Paper more, by way of Epistle, modestly enough, indeed, owning his Conviction in most things I had written. But yet that he had some more Objections still in reserve; and those he sent me in that his Epistle. To make known those Objections, and to satisfy them, I shall here subjoyn my Reply to his Epistle just as I sent it to him. His whole strength running upon the Hinge of Mr. Calvin's Scheme, I was forced to be plain with him, and with that Doctrine: For which if I get the Anger of any of Mr. Calvin's Biggoted Disciples, I cannot help it. *Licet nobis amicus Calvinus, magis tamen amica veritas.* Truth is the best Friend still. I know, all the Learned Doctors of Divinity in the Church of England, now living, whose admirable Works are extant; together with those that are dead, whose excellent Writings were published either in this Age or these Fifty Years last past, will be my Patrons, and Defence, against these sort of Objections from the modern calvinistical Scheme, of solitary Faith, and Justification without good Works. So that I shou'd not have taken notice of them, as Objections of any consequence at all, but for the sake of some honest plain Christians, that are no Polemicks, and do not see through the specious Juggles, and fallacious Quilllets of that way.

Here

Here follows my REPLY to his EPISTLE.

*Of Faith and Justification.*

SIR,

I Receiv'd your kind Epistle, and as to the Substance, your unexpected Civility and Deference to me, is all the Argument that I find unanswerable. You'll pardon me if I say, that I have some presaging Hopes, from your own Expressions, that neither Calvin, nor any other, can keep you in their Discipleship longer than whilst clear and disinterested Truth appears in their Doctrine. The confidence of which puts me upon the trouble of Writing, and giving you also the trouble of Reading this little Scribble more, on the Subject of your last; which might lead into an Ocean of fruitless Controversie, and has already given practical Theology a too voluminous Deversion, from better work God knows: And therefore I cannot hope to adjust it fully, much less to scare all the nice Subtilties of wrangling Divines, in such a short Paper as my little Time and Affairs, will suffer me now to offer on this Subject; which perhaps you will not be satisfied in, till you have dwelt as long on Dr. Hamond's *Practical Catechism*, and his *Annotations*, as you have on Mr. Calvin's *Institutions*.

But one thing I must Remark to you, that the Calvinists way and method of answering our Writings, (which I find you have well enough learnt) is to slip by the strength of our Arguments, and Proofs, and only go on with their own Proofs; as if all the trial were only, who cou'd bring the most number of Objections against the other, without answering the contrary. As for Example; When you writ first against me, you did not Answer the Scripture Testimonies

at

at all, nor so much as touch the better half of all the Arguments I brought : But in my Reply to you, I consider'd every Testimony, and every Argument, and every Objection you offer'd ; and I went through the Root of all your chief Objections, that is, the wrong notions of Faith, which tho' it was the second time I did it (for you took no notice of all I said to it at first, in the very Book you were answering) yet even now at last, in this your second Answer, you bring one the third time to the same matters, about Faith and Justification, without the least Answer to all I said already on those Heads, at either time, first or last. But all this of your last Answer to me, is mostly repeating the old Objections again, with the addition of a few more of the same strain. This is exactly the Popish way of answering our Books, which is the surest sign of a bad Cause, and makes such Volumes, and multiplicities of Repetitions to be endless. What I have said already cuts off most of what you offer now : However the Arguments of this your last Paper being short, I have hopes of giving them some more particular satisfaction, in a short compass.

I hasten therefore to the consideration of what you offer : You propose to maintain two Theses.

First, *That we are justifi'd by Faith alone, without any sort of good Works of what kind soever :*

Secondly, *That although Faith alone justifies us, yet good Works are absolutely necessary to our Salvation.*

Now I think I can prove these Two to be absolutely contrary to each other, by your own Scheme : For Calvin hold there's no falling from Justification by any means, but Salvation will infallibly succeed it : Therefore whatsoever is necessary to Justification, is all that's necessary to Salvation, on our part : For those two are inseparable, as you own. So that all the necessity there can be for more being done for our Salvation than for our Justification must lie only on God's part, to force those good Works upon us, if he will have us saved, and cannot save us without them, after we are justified effectually, and fully.

You plead that *Calvin* does by no means fall in with the Antinomians, because they utterly deny all necessity of any good Works to Salvation: But *Calvin* does not so: Yet I say, the Antinomians can defend themselves on *Calvin's* Principles, for, if there be no necessity of good Works to the final justification of wicked Christians, then certainly there is no absolute necessity of them to their Salvation. So that we see who gave ground to the first rise of Antinomianism. Let us see now how you prove your first Thesis.

First, You premise, that by *Justification by Faith only*, you mean *Justification by Christ's Righteousness alone, laid hold on by Faith*: So that it will follow, that an essential Ingredient in the definition of that Faith which justifies us, must be, a *laying hold on Christ's Righteousness*: But this is wholly unscriptural; and I may challenge you to shew one Text of Scripture that defines Faith so. And indeed, the wickedest of Christians, even whilst they continue so, may do that. But for what you add of *Faith having no respect to any sort of Works never so good*, I Answer, that sort of Faith which so justifies, is the Baptismal Faith, on first coming to Christianity. And so I deny the second Part of your minor, and require you to prove, *that in the Justification of lapsed Christians, no sort of good Works, or Deeds of good Life, done in obedience to Christ, do any way concur in their final Justification*. And this I doubt you will find as hard to prove, as to prove the Scripture to be false. And if *Calvin* be the Patron of that sort of solitary Faith for saving wicked Christians; yet the Popish Church is not, as you suggest, the Patron or original maintainer of our Faith. You'll honour Popery too much, by calling that Popery which is not Popery. Our Faith is what the Scripture teaches us, an obedient Faith, *a Faith working by Love*. Gal. 5. 6. A Faith made perfect by Works; *by Works is Faith made perfect*. Isa. 2. 22. Our Faith is a believing Christ so as to obey him. But what the Papists do teach, differs from us, as widely as we from *Calvin*; they teach the condign Merits of their Works to justify them, by  
the



the deserving value of their Works of Perfection, nay of Supererogation. We say, we owe our Justification primarily to God's Grace, and Christ's Satisfaction; who alone has Merited that our sincere, tho' poor imperfect Works, done in Obedience to his Gospel, and through Faith in him, shou'd in Conjunction with that Faith, be accepted to our Justification, through Mercy, for his only sake. And so *by Grace we are saved*; and all that we do, being from his Grace, we cannot boast. So that we are safe from both Extreame, either of casting off Christ's Merits, or casting off that Gospel Obedience which Christ requires of us in Conjunction with our Faith, by the second Covenant, as essentially necessary to such justifying Faith, for all Christians lapsed after Baptism, or living (after admission by it) in Christianity, or under the Gospel Dispensation. By this time I believe you may foresee, if you did not see it by my last Paper, how I can Answer all your Proofs.

1. To your first, of *Rom. 3. 20. By the Works of the Law shall no Flesh living be Justified in his sight.* We must consider rightly what is meant by Works of the Law: There are Four sorts of Laws to be distinguished, as laid upon Mankind by his Maker. *First*, The Law imposed on *Adam* at his Creation, in the first Covenant, which is sometimes called the Covenant of Works, because it required no less than the Works of perfect unsinning Obedience. *Secondly*, The Law of natural Reason, which the Heathens lived under, and will be judged by. *Thirdly*, The Mosaical or Jewish Law. *Fourthly*, The Christian Law, which is called the *Law of Faith*, *ὁ νόμος τῆς πίστεως*, *Rom. 3. 27.* Now this Christian Law, is so complicated with the Faith of Christ, and included in it, that for the most part it is called only by the name of Faith; in so much that the Transgressors of it are said to have *deny'd the Faith*. And then in opposition to this Law, which is joyned with the Faith of Christ, the other Laws exclusive of the Faith of Christ, are all and every of them distinguishingly called *the Law of Works* in opposition, I say, to

*the Law of Faith, or to Faith in Christ.* Now for those who expected Justification from any thing else but the Faith of Christ; from the best Moral Works, or the best Moral Heathen Works, those Arguing of the Apostles are adopted; proving that all, both Jews and Gentiles, were all under Sin, all under a Curse, entail'd on us by our first Parents; and that by no Performance or Works, of what Law soever, cou'd we be justified, without the Faith of Christ, no not (as we believe even now) by the very best Works of the same sort which the Christian Law now requires, if you separate them from the Faith of Christ, if they be not done in and through the Faith of Christ. So that wherever Works of the Law are at any time, or in any sense opposed to the Faith of Christ, no flesh living shall be justified by them: But on the other hand, if you abstract the Faith of Christ from the *Righteousness which is of Faith*, Rom. 10. 6. That is the Christian Obedience; for mark it the place there quoted, out of Deut. 30. 14. To prove what the Righteousness which is of Faith is, adds to in thy Mouth and in thy Heart, *that thou mayest do it.* And so Rom. 4. 12 13. It is called *the steps of that Faith which Abraham had*, and the *Righteousness of Faith*, which with the Works of it justified him. *No Man* is justified by this solitary Faith, after coming to live in it, no more than he can by solitary Works of the Law, even of the Moral Law, without Faith. And pray observe it, that, as I have already said, there is no one Text in all the Bible which says that we are justified by Faith only, but there is a very plain Text that says most expressly the contrary, James 2. 24. *Yet see then how that by Works a Man is justified, and not by Faith only.*

This of St. James is certainly true, with reference to all that dwell in the Faith; even allowing that a new Comer might on Baptism be justified for that time, by Faith only: Tho we have not so plain a single Text for that, in *Terminis*, but must gather it from other Phrases, as about *believing*, and being *Baptized for the Remission of Sins*. But here where Christian Livers are treated

created with the words of *Justification*, and the words not by *Faith* only, are most express : And it is not a sudden drop Sentence, but for ten Verses before it, substantially proved, and press'd home so convincingly, that it is prodigious to see how People can think to evade it. You offer, indeed, the best Evasion you have found among them for it, that it was *Abraham's Faith*, and not his Person, was Justified by Works : But is not this a manifest Perversion of the Text : Is not *Abraham* the name of the Person, not of the Faith ? And are not the words, *Abraham was justified by Works* ? And to shew further the monstrous Absurdity of this Fiction, can any Man say, *idem per idem justificari debet*, the same to be justified by the same, shou'd Faith be justified by Faith : And yet this will be the consequence of the Apostles Arguing, according to the sense of your Distinction : For apply it to the twenty fourth Verse, and then it will run thus : Ye see then how that by Works (*the Faith of*) a Man is justified, and not by Faith only : As if St. James, or rather the Holy Ghost, took all that care, to prove that a Mans Faith was not justified by Faith only. Thus you see how falshood will trap it self, tho' never so cunning. Indeed, the third and fourth Chapters of the *Romans* are all cheisly about the Works of the Jewish Law, and especially the ceremonial Part, as Circumcision, &c. And that is made plain by the distinction between Circumcision and Uncircumcision, as to *Abraham's* Works, what he did of the Circumcision Works that did not justifie him, but his works of Faith did. And so says St. James expressly, 2. 22. *Seest thou how Faith wrought with his Works*. And if you wou'd but take the pains to read very attentively *Hamond's Paraphrase* and *Annotations* on those Chapters to the *Romans*, you wou'd see this whole matter as clear as the Sun : And you wou'd soon perceive that the Calvinists do but amuse themselves, and trouble others, with abusing and misapplying many Scripture Texts ; especially out of this Epistle to the *Romans* ; which are no more pertinent to the Doctrine

## 118 The Death-Bed Repentance

they wou'd wrest them to; than they are to the Doctrine of the Antipodes.

And accordingly 'tis with your Text here offer'd, which we are often told of by the Calvinists, of Rom. 11. 29. *The gifts and calling of God are without Repentance*; therefore there's no falling from Grace. This, I say, is the strangest misappli'd Text imaginable, to infer such an absurd consequence. When God makes any absolute Decrees of Gifts, and special Priviledges, or of calling Nations to the Gospel, such Decrees of Gifts and calling are without Repentance; but when he conditionally decrees any thing, it will go according to the Condition. But all the Decrees or Promises of particular Men's Salvation, are conditional on their continuance in Faith and Obedience. Wou'd it not be ridiculous in me to Argue, that no Man can Die in this World, because God has freely given him a Birth, and called him to Life in this World; and *the gifts and calling of God are without Repentance*; therefore there's no falling from Life. But that Grace may be fallen from, is as plain in Scripture as any thing in it. St. Paul himself after his Apostleship was solicitous for himself in that point, lest he shou'd yet become a *cast-away*, 1. Cor. 9. 7. and Ezek. 20. 24. *When the Righteous turneth from his Righteousness and commiteth Iniquity*. There's falling from Grace to wickedness. And Heb. 10. 29. He that was before sanctified, might fall to the greatest and sorest Punishment without any Mercy: And see the 38th Verse. If any just Man *draw back*, what will betide him: And Heb. 6. 4. 5. Where it is declared possible, for *them that were once enlightned, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, to fall away again*. And 2. Thess. 2, 3. *There shall come a falling away first*. And many more Proofs might be brought, but that I fear to be too tedious on so clear a Case. Justification is only the pardon of Sins: Now cannot God pardon a Sinner his past Sins upon Repentance, and forsaking them, and living a good Life, in contrary Vertues without stretching that Pardon to all the Sins he shall after commit again, upon a total and final relapse

relapse to a wicked Life? Must God's Pardon be always like some of the Pope's Pardons, not only for past, but future Sins too? Which this Justification once done, wou'd certainly infer, if there be no falling from it again.

And so your other Assertion *that Grace does the work of Conversion irresistably, and that the wickedest heart in the World cannot withstand it:* is a most false Position, quite contrary to the Scripture; and to all right Reason, and most pernicious to all the foundation of human Industry. The Scripture flatly contradicts it. *Acts. 7. 21. Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.* And *Eph. 4. 30. Grieve not the Holy Ghost of God.* And *Heb. 10. 29.* tells us of those *that do despise to the Spirit of Grace*, which they were before sanctifi'd with. And some did frustrate the Grace of God. It is from the Spirit of God that we have all Grace; and if that Spirit may be grieved and resisted, despised and frustrated, then Grace is not irresistable. *How oft wou'd I have gathered you,* says Christ, *but ye wou'd not,* *Matt. 23. 37.* It was the Resistance of their own Wills hindred. And the reason you give also is untrue, *that Man has no Free-will or choice to do good, because that wou'd make him the first mover to his own happiness.* No, we say, God's Grace is the first mover to Man's Happiness, but his own Free-will must be the next mover to his Happiness, or else he'll never come to it. Why does God else call Heaven and Earth to record against us, *that he has set before us, Life with Good, and Death with Evil:* And that he gives us a free Choice, bidding us *chuse Life,* *Deut. 30. 15. 19.* Does he mock us with a Choice, and yet leave us no freedom to chuse? When our Saviour cured the sick Man of the Palsie, and so enabled him to rise, and bad him *arise, and take up his Bed and Walk,* the Man chose to obey his Command, and rise, and carry his Bed, rather than to lie still: Now did that choice of the Man's will, to arise when he found himself able, did that, I say, make the Man the first mover in his own recovery to Health? Was it not Christ's Grace in mercy to him, that was the first mover? But was that



command to him to rise up, irresistible, tho' it was accompanied with Grace to enable him? If a Man finding himself easie wou'd chuse rather to live an idle lazy Life in Bed, rather than carry Burthens on his Back, wou'd Christ irresistably force him to rise? Has not a Man power to chuse whether he will lie still, or get up when he is able to do either? And so, as it was with the sick Man's Body, is it with our Souls, when Christ comes to cure them: He with his Grace enables us, if we will, to rise from the Sickness, nay, *the Death of Sin, to the Life of Righteousness*. And if we love Sin far better, cannot we stay where we are? Will he force us out of it? And if we chuse to obey him, are we the first movers then in our own Recovery? Is not his Grace and Mercy, which alone enabled us, the first mover and fountain of our Salvation? But if People shall be driven into Vertue whether they will or no, by an irresistible Grace, what need is there of any Industry? We may sleep on in Sin, till God rouzes us up, with the same sort of Omnipotent Call, as will bring our Bodies out of the Grave, and called the World out of nothing: Pure Doctrine for those that love to lie yet a while longer in their Sins. All you can say to them will then be easily answered by your own Principles. I cannot do it yet, I do not find in my self the irresistible Grace yet, tho' I firmly believe it will come at last. Mean while you must not be uncharitable, but hope well of me, or else you are but a Popish Patron of Works, and wou'd rob me of my Faith, by which alone I am justified in the sight of God, *without the sinful Appendages of my own polluted Works* (as you have it in your next Paragraph but one, which I shall consider presently.) Is not this precious Orthodoxy for the wicked? Will it not make them zealous Hypocrites? Cou'd Satan desire to give them better Doctrine for his own purpose? The Lord deliver us from it. I declare these Principles, whilst I believed them, were the chief Hinderances to my sincerity; and stopping endeavours of mortifying those evil unchristian Appetites and Passions which I secretly

cretly delighted most in; by furnishing me with hopes without it. What need all that, thought I, 'tis enough sure to cast off all the rest which I have not such fondness for: And so I easily did. Which, with these Principles, made me think my self then secure. Tho' since God has open'd my Eyes in these Doctrines, so that I have rightly understood Christianity (for which I can never bless him enough) I found it absolutely necessary to my Salvation, chiefly, and most of all, to deny those darling Sins that were most acceptable to my Nature. Which sort of our most beloved Sins, to subdue, vanquish, and deny, is all for true followers of Jesus Christ the only chief part of their Duty and Christian Warfare: Or else, at the last Day he will *know them not*: For without that there's no sincerity, all is but Hypocrisy and Cheat else. And then we shall have *our Portion with Hypocrites*, Matt. 24. 51. He that wallows in all Debaucherys presumptuously against his own Principles, is not in so dangerous a case, as he that is a whited Wall, and privately entertains some sort of darling Sins, upon Principles, that consist and comport with them: For the first may sometime by a seasonable Providence be Converted on his own Principles, which were quite unreconcilable with his Practice. But the second will never be convinced, whilst he believes such Principles as may well enough, or any way, be reconcilable with his Practice: So that he, whilst those Principles dwell in him, must Live and Die a *whited Sepulchre*, as our Saviour calls a smooth Hypocrite, Matt. 23. 27.

2. You suppose a *Man must be justifi'd before he can do any acceptable Works*. I grant it, in that sense as Faith justifies the first Comers to it: For without Faith it is impossible to please God. But then when his Person is thus once accepted by God into the Church by Baptism, tho' he shall not be cast out of it again upon every Transgression, yet he shall be disinherited, if he live in perpetual contempt of the Gospel Obedience, which he promised: But if he perform it in such reasonable measure as God in his Mercy accepts through the

Merits

## 122 The Death-Bed Repentance

Merits and Grace of Christ, he shall receive an eternal Inheritance. For example, If a great Prince agree with you, out of meer Favour and Kindness to you, which you have no way deserved, that if you come and serve him so long, in a very small inconsiderable Service, suppose it be but to wash a poor Man's Feet every Day, and upon this, promiseth, that if you will believe his Kindness, and Truth, and do this, he will after such a time of Service make you his Heir to a Dukedom. And so he Invites you into his Service, and with great favour receives you into his Family, and withal, assures you, that if he shou'd put an end to your Work the first Day, or put it out of your power, yet you not having been disobedient, you shou'd certainly Inherit : And yet after all this, you happen to transgress your Duty sometimes, and yet he tells you he'll forgive you that, if you Repent and amend; keeping close to your Duty again, and does so often; but in spite of all motives you'll go on to the end of your time, in the utter neglect and contempt of this Duty; having some pleasant hindering Temptations opposite to it, and those you wholly follow : Now wou'd you expect the reward of Inheritance, and that only by vertue of your believing him, and for the sake of his own meer Grace, and his Son's Merits, and free kindness to you; which indeed is true, was all his motive first and last; but he told you all along by his Son, that if you continued to transgress his easie Command (which wou'd mean while, as he also inform'd you, turn to your own real Good, and had more profit in them than you imagined) you shou'd certainly be disinherited, and greivously punished. Nay, suppose too, that he had redeemed you from Slavery, Death, and Destruction before, and that with the expence of his Son's Blood, to bring you to this happy Service, as well as of his free Grace to reward you so unreasonably for it, for his Son's sake, and assigned your service therefore over to his Son. Here now is a parallel case; Wou'd not those be false Advisers, and cheat you greivously, that shou'd give you a Latitude

= mea sur

tude to hope, even in the constant transgression of your Duty; by telling you, the last cast it self may possibly do, when you can stoop no more, nor move to do any Work? And build that upon such Maxims as these, that it was free Grace granted you this Reward; that believing was the chief condition of the Promises; that all that Work was of no value to your Lord; that he was Kind and Merciful; that if you repent your neglect of Duty, even when you can no longer do it, he may accept the Will for the Deed; that you were Justified freely by his Grace when you were first received into his Family; not for any Deserts of yours or Works that you have done, or cou'd do, were accepted to his Favour; but for his own Goodness, and his Son's sake; that having been once Justified, you cannot miss the Reward; that his Son that redeem'd you was obedient, and that will serve you; that you may lay hold upon the Merit of his Obedience, &c.

Now a plain honest Heart wou'd tell us, that Christ's perfect Obedience was not to exempt or supersede our imperfect Obedience (which is all that God now expects of us, such a Duty as we are able to do through Christ's Grace that strengthens us) but only to be a substitute for that perfect sinless Obedience we first owed to God; not to be a substitute for the poor sincere Duty of such Obedience as we can and ought now to do, in living soberly righteously and Godly in this present World: Not to merit that we shou'd be accepted without that; not to merit an Impunity for our wicked Lives, but to merit that our poor honest Endeavours in a good Life, with true penitent Returns to it from our deplorable Lapses, shou'd be accepted instead of that perfect sinless Obedience, which he himself has done for us, and which will on those terms be imputed to us, for his sake, who purchased this precious Favour for us, by his Death, Satisfaction, and Merits, without which we cou'd never have been justified by any means. These Considerations, I think, if well weighed, are sufficient to shew you the weak side of all your Arguments: Yet I proceed to your Third.

## 124 The Death-Bed Repentance

3. *That the best Works of the most Godly are defiled with sinful Contamination, and so you go on, to despise, and vilifie them to nothing, and not give them the least value. Not so fast, pray; we shou'd not despise that which God himself Values so much, as to make it the very Condition (through Faith) to which Salvation is promised: Nay, the perfecting part of our Faith it self, by Works was Faith made perfect, James 2. 22. And in the 2. Pet. 1. 3, 4. Glory is joyned with Vertue, which we are told Christ has called us to, whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious Promises, &c. And so all the way for five or six Verses more a particular Catalogue of Christian Vertues and Dutys recommended to us in the highest terms. Verse 8. for if these things be in you — And Verse 9. But he that lacketh these things is blind — And Verse 10. If ye do these things ye shall never fall for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And St. Paule says, Titus 3. 8. This is a faithful saying and these things I will that thou affirm constantly that they which have beleived in God might be careful to maintain Good Works, those things are good and profitable unto Men. But surely 'tis not the way to maintain them, to depreiate, and undervalue them so, in comparison of a speculative Notion of a certain Device, of laying bold upon Christ's Merits without them; which Stratagem, the idlest and wickedest of Men can perform to their own satisfaction when they please. 'Tis true, Christ's perfect Righteousness out-shines those imperfect Works of the best Mortals so far, that all is but pitiful and mean to his; and when compared to that, they are nothing; yet they are most excellent Vertues for our benefit, seeing they are the things we are made for, we are the workmanship of God, created unto Good Works, Ephes. 2. 10. And Psal. 16. 3. All my delight is upon the Saints that are in the Earth and upon such as excel in Vertue. In short, the praise and excellency of Vertue, good Life, and Christian Obedience, with the Means and Helps to attain it, and the Injunctions and Motives to it, are the subject of most*



most part of the whole Scripture. In a word, all conspires in this to make us *fear God and keep his Commandments*. And must this Duty be undervalued, because we can't do it in perfection? Because a Candle is nothing to the Sun, must we therefore undervalue and throw away a Candle in a dark Room? No, all this Cant was undoubtedly first set on foot by the Enemy of Mankind, to give hopes of Salvation in a wicked Life.

Neither is there so much sinful Pollution as you suppose in the best of Christian Works. But as the Ordinance of God sanctifies Marriage, and makes that to be no unclean or sinful State; which otherwise wou'd be the most unclean; so much more the Ordinance and Command of God for the Dutys of a virtuous Life, takes away all the uncleanness of them, and makes them delightful to God, 2 Sam. 15. 22. *God delighteth in Obedience more than Sacrifice*, and consequently in good Works more than Prayers: And Prov. 12. 22. *They that deal truly are his Delight*. Psal. 11. 7. *The Righteous Lord loveth Righteousness, his Countenance will behold the thing that is just. He loveth him that followeth Righteousness*. Prov. 15. 9. *'Tis he that keepeth Christ's Commandments shall be loved of him*, as himself says, John 14. 21. *God will surely delight in that which is the imitation of Christ's Righteousness as near as we can, tho' we come infinitely short of our Copy: For 'tis not expected we can come wholly up to it; but still the nearer the better, and the more are we beloved of God for it. Little Children, says St. John, Let no Man deceive you, he that doth Righteousness is Righteous even as he is Righteous*. 1. John 3. 7. and the third Verse says, *Every Man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is Pure*. Nothing defiles us in his Eyes but wilful Sin, unwilful Sins of Infirmity are consistent with a holy state of Grace, and that through his Merits, *who is the Propitiation for our Sins*. I told you in my last that mean and even sordid Cloths is not Nakedness: And pray tell me whether the wickedest Liver among Christians may not heartily say

## 126 The Death-Bed Repentance

say that Prayer which you do (and think as highly of the Piety of it) of *laying hold on Christ's Righteousness, and clothing himself with it.* Nay, the less he has of his own, the more zealous he will be to do so. We do not allow that like the proud Pharisees, or Papists, we shou'd entertain boasting thoughts of the Merit of our Works, but with the greatest humility set about our Duty; and when we have done it, give our selves no thanks, nor sacrifice to our own Nets, but ascribe all to God, and to the Glory of his Grace, but yet to keep a high value for what God so values, as strictly to command; a value for God's Commands, and for the doing our Duty of Obedience to Christ for his sake, and to his Glory; and not disparage the beauty of those Vertues Christ has bestowed on us, and taught us by his own Example: By giving them such vile Characters and Names, as if they were not to be touched without a pair of Tongs. *Pannus Menstruatus*, as you word it, or the comparison of a menstruous Cloth, the Prophet call'd it not so, but filthy Rags; and that he spoke not with relation to Righteousness, *quatenus* Righteousness: But what he said, was of their condition that wanted Righteousness, and had none at all among them: Neither is the Word in that place altogether so Odious: Tho I have often heard that very Name you give it, in the Calvinists publick Pulpit Prayers, and some cou'd never pray in the Pulpit without it, to the great offence of many modest People to my knowledge. The place they ground it on is, *Isa. 64. 6.* But the fifth Verse says, *Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh Righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways to which the last Line belongs (in those is Continuance, and we shall be saved:)* But says the Line above that, *Behold thou art Wroth, for we have Sinned.* Then the next Verse continues the Complaint, *We are all as an unclean thing; and all our Righteousness are as filthy Rags*——— *Our Iniquitys like the Wind have taken us away.* They had little or no Righteousness then you see: So that it was not real Righteousness, but the Apostate want of it, he gave that

name

name of *Filthy* to. And yet this is the only Text in all the Bible can be found to slander Christian Righteousness with. And that word *Menstruous* is not nam'd there neither; that Word is nam'd but three times in all the Scripture, viz. *Isa.* 30. 22. *Lamen.* 1. 17. and *Ezek.* 18. 6. And none of all those places touches Man's Righteousness, or has the least relation to it. But this Text the Calvinists assault it from, has not the Word they use, but a modester Word, only *filthy Rags*, and that not spoken of true Righteousness, or good Life, but of the want of it. Yet they have made this monstrous reproachful Name, so unreasonably common upon this Occasion, that even their younger Boys have it by heart, and often ask what the meaning of the Word is. Let them name another Text if they can, to disparage good Works with. For the saying we are *unprofitable Servants in having done but our Duty*, tho' that be indeed most true, yet it is no Diminution to the real value of the Work, no more than it can diminish the real intrinsick Value of a peice of Gold when I pay it, that I might say, I did but what was my Duty to do, for I ow'd it, and was bound to pay it, and so no thanks to me for that.

4. *We owe (you say) all our Works*, I grant that; and we owe even perfect unfinning Obedience, as our first original Debt, but Christ has paid that for us, and his Merit is in its own nature a sufficient price for the Justification of all Mankind; but then that is not imputed to any particular Man among Christians, but on condition of their future Obedience to the Law of Faith, that is to the Gospel; this is at least the Condition, the *conditio sine qua non*, of our Justification by Christ's Righteousness and Merit, and when we break that Condition, we are unjustified again, till we perform it. So that all we can now do towards our final Justification, is that commanded Obedience of ours through Faith, which will entitle us to his more perfect Righteousness; tho' his be the cause, both our Faith and Obedience is the Condition, and we know

all

## 128 The Death-Bed Repentance

all the promises of Salvation contained in the Gospel, as well as pardon of our Sins, are still conditional.

5. All that you offer here is answered already, nor has our Doctrine any Relation to that proud way of Popery : Nay, it is much more for Christ's Honour to justify us only upon our Obedience through Faith, than to justify us without it. But it was for no good end, that those Arguments which were first proper against the hypocritical proud Pharisees, and also against the like natured Papists, shou'd at last be turned with such out-cry against pious Protestants, and Christian obedient Gospellers, to depretiate and undervalue all their Vertues, with the name of Pride in their Performances : Whereas 'tis plain the vertoufeste Livers are the humblest Men; and 'tis visible there is much more spiritual Pride in the emptiest Pretenders to solitary Faith. There is, indeed, as much danger of Pride in our Faith, as in our Works; for our Faith is as much our own, as our Works; and may as well make us Sharers with Christ in our Redemption, which is the ridiculous Calumny constantly thrown upon the just esteem of our Duty in the Works of Christian Obedience.

It is really a very great Mistake in you to think the Fathers are of this Mr. Calvin's way, tho' he has endeavour'd to wrest some of their Expressions into it, as he has the Scriptures. I assure you once for all, the Fathers are wholly on our side, when they touch the Controversie distinctly, which is but seldom : For that sort of Belief, or solitary Faith without good Life, was an utter Stranger to the Primitive Times, St. James having clearly eradicated that, and all the Fathers that Comment upon him, take his Sense just as we do : To them I refer you ; and thus ends your first Thesis, as you call it.

6. You next say, that you have read much of what has been offer'd by Calvin's Adversaries against the Doctrine : Then I doubt it has been from weak Authors, if they have not satisfied you. But as all of the most learned and famous Divines the Church of England ever bred in

in



in this and the last Age past, have oppos'd this very Point of Calvinism ; so I durst undertake that Dr. *Hammond* alone, if you spent sufficient Time and Consideration on him, would fully convince you : And God may yet grant that Return of your earnest Prayers in what you have not yet receiv'd, *of enlightning your Mind to see his Truth clearly* ; in spite of those artificial Clouds of Darkness, which human Subtilties have rais'd to obscure the plain Gospel Truths.

7. To your second Thesis, which affirms *that good Works are absolutely necessary to Salvation*, I might say, No : because *he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved*, if he die that Minute, tho he never did a good Work. Here I suppose you must be forc'd to bring the same distinction I did to you ; that there are two distinct Seasons of Salvation fitted in different manner, for the two sorts of People to be saved. One for the first Comers to the Gospel, to whose Salvation their good Works are not necessary : T'other for such as do live under the Gospel of Christianity, to whose Salvation good Works are necessary. And now why may not the same be said in Justification ? for I know not what use there can be to Piety in making such nice Distinctions between the means of Justification, and the means of Salvation. I know no difference worth notice between our Justification and our Salvation, but only that Justification is the initial and intermedial State, liable to be revers'd upon Delinquency, and is not finally secured to us, till it be actually crown'd with the end, and then 'tis call'd Salvation ; which is but Justification perfected, after many intervening Acts of Sanctification, by good Life : which being necessary to Salvation (as you affirm) must be so to Justification, to perfect it fully and finally ; that is to secure it from being finally reversed and utterly lost ; and nothing can be necessary to Salvation, which is not as necessary to the Preservation of that which is the only thing that turns into Salvation, that is Justification.



The 'chief Ground of those Misunderstandings I suppose lies in this, that you take Justification to be one sudden Act (as indeed it is to the new Comers to Christianity) and then you think no more of it, as if that could never be reversed again. And hence comes those Principles of no falling from Grace, the Perseverance of the Elect, the Irresistibility of Grace. For it's true, if that first Justification be irreversible, all that do Believe and are Baptized, will infallibly be led into Sanctification and Salvation in spite of their Hearts, some time or other; and People expecting that good Hour, do comfort themselves in their sinful courses mean while, so long as they do not find any force upon themselves (which they expect) to turn them from it. But our Opinion (which is indeed the Truth) that tho' they were justify'd by one Act of Justification, yet having forfeited that again by Sin, their final Justification is ever after suspended, till the end of their Life shews how they have perform'd the Condition of true Repentance, Amendment, and Gospel Obedience; which only can (through Grace and Christ's Merits still) perfect their Justification by their Sanctification, and so 'tis turn'd into Salvation. This Opinion, I say, sets all things right, solves all Difficulties, rescinds all false Hopes, makes Christ's Holy Religion a most plain and reasonable Dispensation, and fully answers all God's gracious Designs upon us.

But pray how can you maintain this your second Thesis, without overthrowing the whole Cause which your first Thesis was set up to defend; that was, that some of the most wicked Christians might at their Death be saved without any good Works, or good Life; to which purpose you maintained that *they were justified without them, and accordingly must be also saved without them.* There you made no difference between Justification and Salvation, as to the point of Works being not necessary. Now you say they are *Prorsus & omnino, absolutely necessary to Salvation, tho' not to Justification.* These things can't hang well together, common Reason will think them plain Contradictions.

dictions. If all, even wicked Christians, when justified, are so justified without good Works, and any one wicked Christian saved without them, how can they then be indispensably necessary to the Salvation of all, or even of any one wicked Christian, without proving there are some Exceptions out of the common Method of saving wicked Christians? But instead of that, the Topic you bring by your first Thesis, will equally serve all wicked Christians. You may say, perhaps, No, it will not serve them who have time to do otherwise. But I answer, All wicked Christians had time to do otherwise, that is to live good Lives; and if all that are justified, are so justified *without good Life, or any regard to it*, as your Thesis says, then how can any of those so justified be damn'd for want of it? And consequently it would follow, that it is not absolutely necessary to Salvation.

*Good Works, you say, are the effect of Faith.* True; but it will never be a finally justifying, that is a true saving Faith, to those that live under the Gospel, till good Works (or in another Word) Gospel Obedience, be perform'd. And all your own Arguments that prove them necessary to Salvation, will prove them as necessary to Justification. And the Examples you bring to illustrate, that *tho Faith and Works are necessary and essentially joyned together*, which surely they are not in a dying wicked Christian that had no good Life, how much solitary Faith soever he had; but you say, *Tho Faith and Works are necessarily and essentially joyned together, yet Faith only does the Justification without the Works.* As the Edge of the Knife cuts without the Haft; and 'tis the Soul thinks, not the Body. Your Examples, I say, prove against you, for when the Edge of the Knife cuts, the Handle is necessary to perform the Operation, and guide it in cutting, so that the Handle has its share in the Business: And so has the Body in thinking, whilst the vital Conjunction lasts here with the Soul, which makes use of the Organs and Animal Spirits towards performing all its Operations.

- 8. You compare *Faith to the Soul*, and *Works to the Body*. But this is a wrong Comparison, and quite contrary to the Scripture, which does not compare Works to the Body, or Faith to the Soul; but compares Faith to the Body, and Works to the Soul; making Works the Life of Faith. *Jam. 2. 10. But wilt thou know, O vain Man, that Faith without Works is dead?* And so Life being the Principle of Motion, Works must be a more active Principle than Faith, in our Justification. And this plainly appears in the Effect; for Faith alone justifies only new Converts, but Faith and Works together can justify even lapsed Christians, whose sinful Lives had put them a degree further from God's Favour than Heathens are.

9. I am not much concerned at your vindicating Mr. Calvin as well as you can; I have no mind to say more of him than I must: But how he has establish'd the necessity of Good Works I cannot understand, otherwise than by a fatal Necessity: For he has said nothing that can convince the absolute unavoidable necessity of the Will's undispenfably chusing them, upon the most certain pain of Damnation. *Gratitude only* will not do that, against the strong propensity of Sin, and most People will think a very little Gratitude of that sort may serve, when they can give fawning Words enough to express their Gratitude to God, in long-winded hypocritical Prayers; as the Pharisees did, whilst they devour'd Widows Houses. I was one of his Disciples once, when I knew no better, but I could never convince any wicked Livers by his Principles, that could answer me upon the same Bottom he has taught. And did I delight in Wickedness, and resolve not to leave it off, I durst undertake to defend my self reasonably well, by his Principles, against any thing he or his Followers could say, for the absolute necessity of my Reformation. 'Tis true, the Antinomians go far beyond him: but they lay their first Foundation upon some of his Principles. 'Tis too tedious for me here to show how, more than I did already in part, for I have not time; and do suppose  
I may

I may have tired you enough already, and yet have not quite ended your Paper.

10. You say *Eternal Life is not given to well Doers, for so doing, but for believing.* We say, for both together; for Obedience through Faith in Christ, or for so believing him as to obey him: But still primarily or principally neither for believing him, nor obeying, but for the Satisfaction, Merits, and Mercy of Christ: And secondarily it self, not for any Merit of ours, either of Works or Faith: For we *disclaim all Merits but Christs: Yet we believe and know good Works* through Faith (or Gospel-Obedience) is the only undispenfable necessary Duty on our part, unto Justification and Salvation. And if this be *going halves with Christ in our Salvation*; we know not how that cou'd be mended by leaving out our Works, if we bring but our Faith it self in for a share with him. For if Faith can lay hold on the Merits of Christ, so can Works too by the Hand of Faith. and our Faith is as much our own Child, as our Obedience is, tho' we owe both unto God's free Grace.

11. What remains I have sufficiently spoken to already. As about *the Pollution of our best Works.* Which you bring over again. And you wonder but at a Fiction of your Imagination, if you apply those Surmises to us; that we trust to the Merit of our own Righteousness: For we do no such thing as you mention. But if you speak them against the Papists, and their Merits, go on, and prosper; I have received no Fee to Plead for them. But surely if this Contention between Protestants on this Subject, were but a mere *Logomachia*, or Strife about Words; we shou'd take that side which appears the honestest for securing the undispenfable Necessity of a good Life; and the plainest, and freest from danger of ill Consequences; and the safest from giving any Advantage either to Infidels, or to wicked Christians.

On the one hand, we declare that we are fully and finally justified by the free Grace and Mercy of God, without any Merits of our own, by the Satisfaction



## 134 The Death-Bed Repentance

and Death, and Blood of his Son Jesus Christ, and through Faith in his Gospel; but that such a Faith as is commensurate to the whole Gospel, (for the whole Gospel is the Object thereof,) such a Faith as contains in it a good Life, obeying his Precepts; as well as receiving his Promises, and believing the History of his Life and Death; in a word receiving him by Faith, for our King, Priest, and Prophet; our King, to command our Obedience to his Laws, as well as to save us from our Enemies Sin, Satan, Death, and Hell. Our Priest, to make a full Attonement for us to God, and to bless us, *by turning every one of us from our Iniquities*, Acts 3. 26. our Prophet, by teaching us what the acceptable Will of God is in every Particular, and what the Method of our Redemption is, and how to Glorify God in all this; how to Pray as we ought, Live as we ought, and Believe as we ought; so to Believe in him as to Obey him; This we say is our Faith, which (in Subserviency to God's Free Grace and Mercy in Christ) justifies us.

On the other hand the Calvinists declare, that we are *justify'd by Faith alone*, and that such a sort of Faith as only takes hold on Christ's *unfading personal Righteousness*, without the least ingredient of, or regard to, any of our Christian Obedience. But in that it self, they can never make us sure when we have certainly laid hold on it, otherwise than by Imagination; we cannot be sure I say of any Faith, without the Christian Obedience; which yet they wholly Exclude from it, and vilify the best Christian Works, with the odious Name of *menstruous Rags*. Now which of these is the honestest Doctrine, the safest Doctrine, the plainest, and freest from the danger of ill Consequences? 'Tis certainly true, (and the reason of the most of Mankind will always hold to it) that if good Works be not necessary to the Justification of those that Live in Christianity, they cannot then be absolutely necessary to their Salvation, which is inseparable from final Justification; and must infallibly follow it without any more ado: And the Calvinists always make their Justification,



ification, a final conclusive Act. So that it is impossible those good Works which are not necessary to Justification, shou'd be necessary to Salvation, *Necessitate absolutâ*, but only *secundum quid, vel ad melius esse*. And therefore Antinomianism it self cou'd never be thorowly confuted by Mr. Calvin, upon his Principles. If I Preach up a good Life never so much, and press for it neyer so earnestly, and say all the fine things I can for it ; yet my Labour will be frustrated, if I have first undermined the absolute Necessity of it. What wou'd signify my Bawling to a House to stand, saying never so much how necessary 'tis it shou'd stand, in gratitude to its Builder (supposing it cou'd understand me) and muster up all the Benefits, and Advantages of its standing ; if I had first undermined it, wou'd it not in all likelihood fall with the first Storm, in spite of all my Preaching it up ? So that you may see Mr. Calvin is not altogether so much wrong'd as you imagined, for let his own Life ( which you magnify ) have been how it wou'd, yet when any Principles do so evidently tend to enervate the very Sinews and Joynts of a good Christian Life, we shou'd beware of a Snake under the Grass. And I stick not to say ; (for I think I am able to prove it) that Quakers, Antimonians, and all other Sectaries among us, are but the Spawn of Poperie, begotten by that Libertinism (*Calvin's Scheme* first help'd to introduce) which pretends being *free from Bondage to the Law of Works* ; this being perversely understood (for it truly means the Jewish Law, that Partition Wall which Christ pull'd down, but not the Moral Law, which Christ says he *came not to destroy, but to fulfil*, Matth. 5. 7.) this perverse Understanding I say of those Phrases about the Law of Works, according to the Sense which Calvin too much harp'd on, has made People (beyond his Intention perhaps) wrest so many Scriptures to their own Destruction. And its certain most of those that are both Learn'd and Pious, and all that are out of bigotry to Calvinism, if they be fond of a good Life,

## 126 The Death-Bed Repentance

will be apt to infer natural Consequences ; and to be jealous of him, that tho' he was not an open Enemy to a good Life, but esteem'd well of it, he might be feared for all that, to have done it much Disservice, like a backbiting Friend, whatever he pleaded openly for it ; when he had first so depreciated the worth of it, undervalued it, vilify'd it, and deprived it of its share in the means of our Justification : Whereas in plain Terms, and in one word, a good Life was the intent of our very Baptism, *Therefore were we Baptized*, says the Apostle, *Rom. 6. 4.* To live in Christ's Religion is nothing else, but to live a good Life through Faith in him, this is the all and all of it, to *fear God and keep his Commandments, this is the Whole Duty of Man*, *Eccles. 12. 13.* Now I think, I have fully, tho' briefly, answered every Paragraph of yours, as my Haste wou'd permit. And so I conclude,

S I R,

Your most Affectionate Servant in Christ,  
EDWARD NICHOLSON.

On this he acquiesced, and then came to my Lodging in *Dublin*, and acknowledg'd entire Satisfaction, before several Witnesses.

V. I have now but one Objection more to answer, that this Doctrine of mine (of the Impossibility of a mere *Death-Bed's Repentance* being effectual to the Salvation of any wicked Liver among Christians) is *but one Doctor's Opinion*. And this is thought a very sufficient Answer to all I can say. And it is the usual Objection from sensual Livers against every Doctrine, that is grating to Flesh and Blood ; they can get other Doctors, that will be civiler, and teach them more acceptable smooth Things, *Men-pleasers*, more Genteel, Debonair, Courtly, complaisant Orators, that have no chagrin Humours, or hard Principles to disgust them with, but will cry *Peace, Peace, where there is no Peace*, *Jer. 6. 14.* and will comply with the Desires of these rebellious Children to the Lord, that the Prophet mentions, *who will not hear the Law, which*  
say

*say to the Peophets, prophesy not unto us right Things, speak unto us smooth Things, prophesy Deceits, Isa. 30. 10. This I cannot help, there's no remedy for't in our Hands. But yet we must tell them their own smartly, we must speak on, and spare not; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, Ezek. 2. 7. But as to this Doctrine being but one Doctor's Opinion; that is utterly false. You have already seen in Sir Robert King's Letter, what Dr. Sharp, Archbishop of York preach'd. And I have Letters under the Hand of another Archbishop, our most Reverend Primate of all Ireland, now living, with full Approbation of my Doctrine in that Point; and Exhorting me to persist in the Defence of that Truth, about the Death-Bed Repentance, which he says, he neither believes nor fears that any one can overthrow.*

I shall here produce the Testimony of another Excellent Bishop. The most Pious, and Learned, Dr. Taylor, Bishop of Down and Connor, who publish'd this Doctrine above Fifty five Years ago, as I find by the first Edition of his *Unum Necessarium, or the Doctrine and Practice of Repentance, rescued from popular Errors*. Printed in the Year 1655. It is indeed one of the principal Aims of his whole Book. And in his 5th Chap. at the end of his 4th Sect. He has these Words. *Much less can it be imagined that he, who hath transgressed the Righteousness of the Law (that is by a wicked Life you must suppose, as a'l his Sense of it shews) and broken the Negative Precepts, and the natural human Rectitude, and hath superinduced Vices contrary to the Righteousness of God, can ever, be or, hope to be justified by those little Arrests of his Sin, and his Beginnings to leave it, upon his Death-bed, and his Sorrow for it; then when he cannot obtain the Righteousness of God, or the Holiness of the Gospel.*——And a little after, *He that will not begin to Live well, till he hath no Lusts to serve, no more Appetites to please, shall never arrive at Happiness in the other World.* Now is this any thing short of Impossibility? I say 'tis impossible they shou'd, he says it cannot be imagined that they can, and positively pronounces, they shall

## 138 The Death-Bed Repentance

shall not, and in his Epistle Dedicatory, at the 7th Page. He says, *He that Preaches this with the greatest Zeal, and the greatest Severity, may seem to take the Liberty of an Enemy; but he gives the Counsel and the Assistance of a Friend.* And in his Book, Chap. 5. Sect. 5. Numb. 65. Page 289. he says *his Instance is of the Thief upon the Cross, who then first came to Christ, and his Case was as if a Heathen were new converted to Christianity. Baptizatus ad horam, securus hinc exit, was the Rule of the Church—But God requires more Holiness of Christians than he did of Strangers, and therefore he also expects a longer and more lasting laborious Repentance.*—*It is true, we must not absolutely despair (of a wicked Man whilst alive) but neither must we presume without a Warrant; nay, Hope, as long as God calls effectually. But when the Severity of God calls him off from Repentance, by allowing him no Time, or not Time enough to finish what is required, (viz. the good Life) the Case is wholly differing.* And a Page after he says, *even that imperfect Repentance, done in that little Time, God rejects not, but will give to it a great Reward* So he did to Ahab. *And whatsoever is Good, shall have a Good; some way or other it shall find a Recompense.* But every Recompense is not eternal Glory, but every good Thing shall not be recompensed with Heaven. And in this same Book, in his Preface to the Clergy of England at the 15th Page, he says, that, *being too easy in promising Pardon (as he Instances the Romanists do to a Death-bed Repentance) is all one as to Teach, or directly warrant Impiety.*

I can give no Reason why this excellent Book, of this admirable Man, is so little known, by many of our younger Clergy; but that it is too large a Book perhaps (being about 800 Pages) for those that are too little Bookish.

And 'tis certain all that Society in London, lately called the *Athenian Society*, have positively asserted that Point of my Doctrine, and published it to the World in Print. I shall here transcribe about the one half of what they have published on that Head, in one *Mercury*, which that one Question alone has taken up. 'Tis in the 18th Vol. Numb. 3. 'As

‘ As to the Question, *Whether a Death-bed Repen-*  
‘ *tance may be sincere?* We answer, in the Words of a  
‘ late Author : *It’s in vain to ask whether God cannot save*  
‘ *a Man after a vicious Life, since his own Will seems to re-*  
‘ *strain his Power ; that he will not save Men without a*  
‘ *recovery to Holiness. He is Holy, Just, and True, as well*  
‘ *as Merciful. The same Word that informs us He is*  
‘ *Merciful and Gracious, likewise tells us, he will by no*  
‘ *means clear the Guilty. That if we live after the Flesh,*  
‘ *we shall Die, that he cannot Lie nor deny himself. I*  
‘ *have no Pleasure in the Death of him that dieth saith the*  
‘ *Lord ; wherefore turn your selves, and live ;* Implying,  
‘ except we turn to him, his Mercy will do us no good.  
‘ What Reason have we to expect it, which we have  
‘ used to evil Purposes, and his Dishonour ? That he  
‘ shou’d work Miracles for us, while we despise the  
‘ Means ? *Cause the Sun to stand still for us, because we*  
‘ *have trifled away our Days ? Turn Stones into Bread,*  
‘ for us who have been Slothful, and are ready to Pe-  
‘ rish ? That he should stand ready for us *with that*  
‘ *Grace at last, which we have so long refused and re-*  
‘ *jected. God is as Peremptory for the Time, and Sea-*  
‘ *son, as for the Duty it self. There’s a Time when*  
‘ *he will not be found, nor accept our Offering. The*  
‘ *Day of Grace lasteth not so long as the Day of his*  
‘ *Patience : The fruitless Fig-tree stood still in the*  
‘ *Vineyard, un-cut down, but withered away under*  
‘ *that fatal Curse ; never Fruit grow on thee more. Tho’*  
‘ *he will pardon the Infirmities of the Sincere, yet*  
‘ *there’s a certain Period set for the return of Sinners, be-*  
‘ *yond which, all their Industry is ineffectual. Jerusalem*  
‘ *neglected the Day of her Visitation, and the Things*  
‘ *of her Peace were irrevocably hid from her Eyes : Esau*  
‘ *found no Place of Repentance (in his Father) tho’*  
‘ *he sought it carefully with Tears : The foolish Virgins*  
‘ *saw, and were troubled, that they wanted Oil, and*  
‘ *endeavour’d after it ; but too late, the Door was*  
‘ *shut, and no knocking powerful enough for their*  
‘ Admission.



## 140 The Death-Bed Repentance

‘ The Design of *the Parable of the Vineyard* (so grossly abused) where those that went into it at *the last Hour*, were rewarded equally with those *that bore the burden and heat of the Day*; was to teach the Jews, that, tho’ God had chose them first to be his People, yet at the *eleventh Hour* (*i. e.* in Gospel times, or end of the World) He would call in, accept of, and reward the Gentiles as largely as they, notwithstanding their repining and murmuring at this his Grace and Mercy; *the Reward being to all, of Grace, and not of Debt.* At least it’s no Advantage or Encouragement to those that are call’d upon and engaged, yet refuse, and delay coming in, till old Age; adjourn their serving God to their going out of the World: For those that went in *at the eleventh Hour*, were not call’d before; but found standing idle, because no Man had hired them.

‘ And as for the Thief upon the Cross, we say, *First*, That it appears not of him, (nor have we any reason to charge it on him) that he ever *procrastinated*, or purposely posted off his *Conversion to this so late a date*; and so he will not be matter of Comfort to them that do. *Secondly*. That as far as we have any Knowledge he seems not *ever to have heard of Christ*, at least, not to have been called or *instructed by him*, till he met him upon the Cross; and consequently he can be no President to any that have lived an Age, or great part of it, under the preaching of the Gospel.

‘ They dreadfully mistake themselves, that crowd up *Repentance into so narrow a Room as a Sick-Bed*, when Men have scarce time to reckon up all the particular Duties that make it up: That imagine the Tree that hath been always barren, should bring forth good Fruit, now it is a cutting down: That a Man should live a Life of Holiness, when he is just a dying: That a weak, infirm Person, of disabled, disturb’d Faculties, should build that in *three days*, which others notwithstanding all their Abilities and Diligence, find hard enough to do in *forty years*: That those who have had the Knowledge of God, and been call’d up-  
on

on all their Lives to give up themselves to him; should be accepted when they pour out to him, instead of the generous Spirits of Life, the *Lees and Dregs of it*. When the Blood cools in the Veins, and the Spirits are ready to stand still, the *Season of the Pleasures of Sin* is over, and a Man is no longer to live *where they are*; to cast himself upon Religion, when there's nothing else to vie with it, when all things else fail: That he must take us in a Night, tho' he hath in vain *stretched out his Hand to us all the Day long*; as if this State of Life were prepared only for a Stage for Men to act their Vices and Exorbitances upon, and then God should remove them to Heaven, that have but just begun to acknowledge him, by some weak Devotion, extorted even out of Necessity; and given the bulk of their Time to Sin, that have sacrificed the *Male of their Flock to Lust*, and even with impious Designs kept the corrupt thing for him. That the easie Yoak, the light Burthen, which cost the Son of God his Life to obtain Heaven upon, should be to them an intollerable Load. And Heaven expected to be had on easier Terms. That God should have only the *faint and feeble Services of a Death-Bed*, for his Mercies vouchsafed us all our Days. That he should accept of such a Commutation for the Obedience due to him, as a *Death-Bed Repentance*, a few Sighs, and Groans, Tears, Promises, Scatterings of Devotion, in Exchange for all our Duties; as if it were sufficient to expiate a whole Life of *Impiety*, with a Breath to retract all the Dishonour we have done him in it; as if he had made us to take the *Delights* he most abhors, and after all to give us such a *Stupendous Reward*. From the Word of God Men have no Promise to warrant such a Confidence: If they have, let them shew it; if they have not, they must thank (or rather condemn) themselves for bringing themselves into a Condition without the Covenant, without a Promise, *hopeless, and miserable*. And oh! how miserable must he needs be, that lies upon the *Brink of Eternity*, encountering the Throws and Horrors of an imminent

## 142 The Death-Bed Repentance

'*went Dissolution*, the doubts what will become of him  
'in another World, the Fears of *Hell*, the Uproars of  
'a guilty *Conscience* ; whom God hath left to the boyl-  
'ing *Sea* of his own *Terrors*, and thrown him out no  
'*Anchor of Hope*. Here they end.

Now as it is clear, all Possibility has Hope ; so if there be no Anchor of Hope, there's no Possibility.

All these Testimonies hitherto produced I have met with *abiter*, without searching for them, and I hear of late Dr. *Pain* holds with me ; so that I do not question, but if I made it my Business to keep Correspondence for such Enquiry, I should find out abundance of those *very great and eminent Divines*, whom Dr. *Scott* himself acknowledges to hold in my way. By those I named already, we see the thing is not to be called one Doctor's Opinion. Nay, many of our best Writers, as the Author of *the Whole Duty of Man*, Dr. *Hammond*, Dr. *Cave*, Dr. *Sherlock*, &c. if they do not name the Word *Impossible*, yet they say such things about the utter desperateness of it, as in common Sense are Tantamount to an Impossibility.

VI. All that I have deliver'd about this Doctrine, which may with any colour be justly thought new ; is only that, of God's *giving the wicked Sinner some longer Life, if he saw his Change so truly sincere as to entitle him to Mercy*. The greatest Question will be, whether God ever does see such a thing ? 'Tis clear he does not, if the Sinner then dies ; and if what all the forementioned Divines say be true, that a Death-Bed Repentance alone cannot be a true Change, cannot be a Repentance to Salvation in wicked Christians ; then God cannot see that in them which is not in them, *viz.* a true sincere Change, entitling them to Mercy. But I will come nearer to my Adversaries than that, and suppose there may possibly in some very extraordinary case be such a true sincere Change in a wicked Christian, which God sees so as to make him an Object of Mercy. Yet then the Scene is changed too, as well as the Man ; for God will not leave the Work unfinished, and so will not leave it then to a mere Death-Bed

Issue.

Issue, because a mere *Death-bed Repentance* to such cannot be perfect, cannot be saving, without time to do the Works; that is, to do the good Life, which is then sincerely resolved on; and so God's Mercy will give him time to do it. There can be nothing pretended from Scripture against this; but all the Scripture is against saving him the other way, without the good Life; we have no Exception, nor so much as room for any hopes of that. Yet indeed all the general Promises of God's Mercy and Goodness, may be applicable to my way. The other breaks through all God's most solemn Sanctions, and saves some People contrary to all God's express Protestations, and his known Covenants, and declared Will, and Methods of the Gospel; which is, *to reward every one according to his Works*, which cannot mean less than his final good Life at least. And besides the general Promises of God's great Goodness, and earnest Desire, that all Sinners should save themselves, by turning to Righteousness, and live. *For why will ye die? — Wherefore turn your selves, and live, Ezek. 18. 31, 32. and Chap. 33. 11. and many other Scriptures.* Besides these, I say, we have a sort of particular Promise to Sick-Bed Sinners, *That the Prayer of Faith shall save the Sick, and the Lord shall raise him up;* (it should seem that otherwise without raising him up, he could not be saved, if he were under my case) *and if he have committed Sins, they shall be forgiven him, James 5. 15.* I know this related then to the visible Gift of Miracles at that time in the Church, and accordingly a visible Sign was appointed of anointing the Sick with Oyl; and I am accordingly sure, my Opinion of the sick Penitents Recovery, if truly penitent, was (even in lesser case, or necessity, than that of my stating) the general Opinion of the Primitive Church in the first Age of Miracles. Nay, that same true Repentance was still the very Foundation of the Miracle that recover'd the Sick; which Sickness was often the Punishment of their Sins. Sins are frequently the cause of Sicknes, among them that God would mercifully

correct

## 144 The Death-Bed Repentance

correct in this World, in order to save them in the next, by bringing them to true Repentance. *For this cause* (says St. Paul) *many are weak and sickly among you,* 1 Cor. 11. 30. And 'tis clear, without such true Repentance through Faith, the Sick could not be healed by Miracles it self. The want of that hinder'd even our Saviour's Miracles, in his own Country, *Matth. 13. 58. And he did not many mighty Works here, because of their Unbelief.* And we are told, St. Paul, at *Lystra*, seeing a Cripple, and perceiving that he had Faith to be healed, he heal'd him. So that true Faith, which always includes true Repentance, was the very ground of the Miracle that heal'd the Sick, and that even when the visible Ceremony of anointing with Oyl was used. Yet since the visible Power of Men to work such Miracles is abolished, and the Ceremony with it; the Papists do abuse that Ceremony still, to make a Sacrament for Lucre of it. But thô God, for Signs, to convert a sufficient number of Infidels, to make him an Established Christian Church in the World, which might after propagate it self without Miracles, was pleased to give a visible Power to Men in those first Ages to work open Miracles, which are now ceased, it does not follow but that God may, and doth, by himself without the Interposition, or noted Gift, of any Man, do such things invisibly, by his own Power, as he sees will fulfil the design of his own Providence, both in his general Government of the World, and of some particular Persons Cases in it. And this case being the highest any Man can have, the Salvation or Damnation of his Soul depending on it; I see no reason why we should not in this greatest Exigence, apply this Promise, as at least an implicit one, without the human Instruments, by anointing, (as it was an explicit one with them at that time) to this truly penitent Sinner, if such he be; for God should be supposed then to intend to forgive his Sins, and Sin being the Cause of Death, when the Load of Sin is alleviated, why should not he be raised up, to live a good Life? Seeing without that he must die eternally, and then



then his Sins cannot be forgiven. But if he be now truly penitent and faithful, *the Prayer of Faith shall heal the Sick*, in this one Case especially ; now or never it must be true, for here's the most principal Case it could ever fall out in. Nay, without so great a Case, or any such evident Peril of Eternity, I am sure God often grants, that *the Prayer of Faith shall heal the Sick*, even in this very evil Age. I speak by Experience too, when I have known a Man of infirm Constitution, preserv'd, and brought incredibly through many desperate Distempers, and hopeless Conditions, to a greater Age than he could ever hoped to have lived within twenty Years of, and is yet alive to this Day ; his chief Application having been by Prayer to God, to whom alone he acknowledges the preservation and prolongation of his Life. And we make no scruple to say that every good Christian should, and must, acknowledge the same, for all their own Lives respectively, let their Strength be what it will : Providence has done the Work, or else they had been gone. It may be objected, that God often gives further Life by strange Recoveries to them that prove after, by relapse to wicked Life, that their pretended Repentance was unsincere. I answer, that's true ; but God might well do that, to make them self-condemn'd. *Out of thine own Mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked Servant, Luke 19.*

22. But this strengthens my Cause ; for if God gives longer Life often to an unsincere Repentance, much more will he once, for a hundred of those times, give it certainly to a real true and sincere Change, when the Soul's infallible Salvation wants nothing else but that further Life.

If what I have said on this, does not to every impartial Judgment amount to an absolute Proof of the thing ; yet I am sure 'tis the highest of Probabilities, that if God saves any such at all, it must be that way. And 'tis both the safest and the pioudest Opinion, that we can entertain in this Case : Our Church has designed nothing against it, and why should we be so hardly brought to believe a thing that would be so

## 146 The Death-Bed Repentance

useful, and rid of so many Difficulties, and which, for any thing can possibly be said against it, may certainly be true? What hurt can there be in believing it? I am sure no body can disprove it. And I am as sure, to give such a wicked rebellious Christian the Reward of a good Life, without a good Life, is not agreeable to God's reveal'd Will, nor to his Veracity, nor to his Justice; even as the second Covenant it self, the Christian Covenant, has mollify'd his Justice. And as to his Mercy, this way magnifies it best, and saves his Justice too. His Mercy thus will be as extensive to the other Life, as my Adversaries would have it. And why should they be angry, if it thus shed some of its Beams to this Life also? when without that the hopes of it in the other Life cannot be concluded. And this fully, and much more effectually, answers the very Ends and Reasons for which they would gain up-hold that Notion of a *Death-bed Repentance* being possibly saving; that is, to prevent utter Despair; and to encourage the best Endeavours of the Sick, which certainly will be much more quicken'd, by the Hopes of such Mercy in this Life, added to that of the other Life: and it would reconcile the whole Difference too, between both sides, and leave us no more to dispute about.

To conclude, I must here, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, earnestly and passionately beg and beseech my dear Brethren that are entrusted with the Care of Souls, seriously to lay this Matter to Heart, in the Name of the Lord; and to consider whether if they allow such an Exception of some such obstinate dying Sinners Escape, that has lived as long as he could, that is till Death has arrested him; and this is known by all other wicked Men yet in health, that know or believe he was as wicked as they are; whether such an Exception being granted, every such wicked Man will not certainly and naturally be inclined to except himself? and whether all the Limitations that can be put on such Exceptions, will hinder other wicked Men from fancying, those Limitations may one Day fit them.

themselves as well as him that is dead. On the other hand, whether if they can be convinced, that there is no possibility to escape *the Terrors of the Lord*, at the last Arrest, if Death ensue; that *Tribulation and Anguish*, that will come upon every Soul of Man that worketh Evil, as it is expressed *Rom. 2. 9.* especially they that continue doing so to Death's last Summons. Whether this, if believed as it ought, will not choak their false self-flattering Sophistry, to the purpose; and force them, in spite of their Hearts, to think of some other way for escaping Hell, and oblige them to do something, before it be too late. And also in God's Name let us consider, whether there can be found out an honest Sense of saving Repentance for wicked Livers among Christians, than what so includes a good Life, as to imply the Impossibility of being saved without it some time or other, at least, either sooner or later, before Death's Sicknes: Or whether we can find a better way to defend Christianity on that side, from the insolent Scoffs of prophane Mockers, who would make a Jest of our Religion, by urging that our Gospel commands all People that believe, to be sure to live well on pain of Damnation, every one that nameth the Name of Christ to depart from Iniquity, and yet allows Salvation to the most obstinate Transgressors of those Commands, and the greatest Rebels to their Faith in their Practice, tho continuing so all their Lives; if they take a little thought at their Death of the terrible Case they are then in; which there is very few or none that will not, of those that believe there is a future Account to be made: Then this may be called a true Change, and who can deny any Man's Death-Bed Sorrow to be such? and so the Work is done.

It may, perhaps, be thought by some that the great Hazard and Danger, which by all is alledg'd to be in the Death-Bed Case, may suffice to caution any rational People from trusting to it. I answer, The most of Sinners are not so highly Rational; the generality of Mankind are commonly Fool-hardy, and will venture through the greatest Hazards, where they can have

## 148 The Death-Bed Repentance, &c.

any hopes of Escape. Whilst we allow a Possibility, we allow *Hopes* ; and whilst we allow Hopes in an evil Life, even unto Death ; I know not how we can ever convince Fool-hardy People (or indeed any one at all) of the *absolute* necessity of a good Life in Christianity. For the necessity of good Life cannot be absolute, if there be any possibility of a wicked Christian's being saved without it : Which *good Life*, or *Morality*, after professing Christ, if it be taken away from the Essentials of our Religion, or from what is *absolutely* necessary to our *Salvation* ; and that this were generally yielded to, the next Step I fear would be to take away Christianity it self.

---

POST-

---

# POSTSCRIPT.

THE foregoing Treatise having been perused by a Reverend Friend: He was pleased most kindly to take the Trouble of sending me some Animadversions, with the Objections of others rather than his own. And it being my Part to Answer all material Objections if I can, as they come in my way; I thought these fit to be fully considered, having received several of them, and particularly the first Objection from other Hands before. I shall set the Objections down in their own Terms, and after each shall endeavour to make my Answer. Not for his Satisfaction that last sent them, who I make no Question, knows how to Answer them better himself, but for the Satisfaction of others who may possibly light on the same Thoughts.

*Objection 1. relates to Section 2. of the Book Number 16. at these Words, No Sin at all in Despair properly speaking.*

Not to believe as we ought of God, I grant, comes properly under the Name and Sin of *Infidelity*: But the *Application* of any such false Notions to a Man's self, so as from thence to conclude that he is *totally excluded* from God's Mercy, when really he is not so; is one sort of *Despair*, and, in the Opinion of all Divines generally, a Sin: Nor do I take the Error of the Understanding from whence such Despair may proceed, to be more an Excuse for that, when it may be for other Sins. Where *Hope* is a Duty, some sort of *Despair* must, I think, be a Sin. Bishop Taylor (as I remember) distinguishes between the *Sin of Despair*,



and the *Misery of Despair* : And this Distinction I take to be enough for the present Purpose.

~~But to say that Despair is a Duty~~, may not only startle, but also perplex weak Understandings : And therefore I am no Friend to such unusual Expression, however they may be interpreted to an Orthodox Meaning.

*Answer*, For a Man to judge that he is excluded from God's Mercy, when he is not, is but his Mistake ; and I know not then how it can be his Sin, unless it be a wilful Mistake, and then the Sin lies in not endeavouring to rectify his Understanding ; without which the erroneous Judgment he makes of his own Condition must be as unavoidable as a legitimate Conclusion is from its Premises. And to infer, a right Conclusion can be no Sin. But if a Fault be in the Premises, the Sin must be there.

A Man's Actions are produced between the Understanding, Will, and Affections. The Will is the Performer or Executioner, so that no Man can properly be said to have done any thing against his Will, tho' it be against his Inclination, he must Will to do it, before it can be done. Sins of Immorality are done by the Will, and cannot be excused by Errors of the Understanding ; for no weakness of Understanding can compel the Will unavoidably to do such Facts ; but the Will is then blameable, as it is in all Sin, which the Man's Will is always drawn into by his sensual Affections, for his Pleasure, Profit, or other Ends, which bribes the Understanding too. But when a Man divests himself of these Temptations, and gives up himself and his Will wholly to the Conduct of his Understanding, and by that falls into an Error pernicious to himself every way, as well as against all his Pleasures, Profits, and sensual Temptations either of Flesh or Spirit : This must certainly be the sole Fault of the Understanding. Whereas in the other sort of sensual Errors or immoral Practices, the whole Man was Guilty, with his Affections, Will and Choice. But here the Man wou'd rather Will otherwise,

wife, and cannot against his Understanding, the Fault of which (as to the Error we are speaking of) must lie either in Ignorance or Infidelity. So that it is plain the weakness of the Understanding cannot be as much an Excuse for Immoralities, as for want of Hope, when there is no reason seen for Hope.

The Man wou'd rather Will to conclude well of himself, but cannot possibly do it by any Rules of Reasoning. There's no Command that he shou'd Hope without Reason, and whenever Hope is a Duty, 'tis a Hope upon right Grounds. But the Hope of Heaven on Terms contrary to those it is discern'd to be promised on, is no Duty; and while that Case appears so, it can be no Sin not to Hope, because that is not then contrary to any Duty. I think it is rather a Christian's Duty not to Hope, otherwise than on the right Ground of good Life, for that were Presumption, *the Hope of the Hypocrite shall Perish*. A conditional Hope on one side, makes a conditional Despair on t'other side; and they are both equally a Christian's Duty. What moves a Man to do any thing but despairing to gain his Point without it? As well as hoping to gain his Point by it.

The Objection says, that Hope being a Duty; some sort of Despair must be a Sin, that is true of Despair in the Complex, as it contains those Errors of Ignorance from the Understanding, or Infidelity from the corrupt Affections, which produced the Despair. But I said *Despair properly speaking*, that is Despair abstracted from those *Causes* where the *Sin* truly lies, which I shew'd to be but the *Inference* drawn from those Premisses, which I held to be no Sin at all, in Opposition to those whose Necessities from the Calvinists Scheme, drove them to call it the Sin against the Holy Ghost; when they had no other way, on their Predestination bottom, but by that frightful Doctrine of Sin against the Holy Ghost, and their Death-bed Repentance Doctrine, to prevent the encrease of so many Innocent lived Despairers as grew daily on their Hands. Yet they made thereby Pre-

sumption, and Hypocrisy, grow infinitely faster, and to a fatal height among Christians.

Despair, as it is treated of to be a Sin, may have respect to two several Things, either despair of Heaven and Salvation, or despair of our Duty. 'Tis despair of Heaven and Salvation I mean, by Despair in the true and proper Sense. And I affirm despairing of that can be no Sin whilst we know we are not under the Terms of Salvation. This is enough for the Exigence of my Cause; that despairing on the *Death-bed* (in the Case we are supposing) *can be no Sin at all*. But if there be a Sin in despairing of Ability to perform our Duty, whilst we have Time and Health to perform it, I need not be concern'd against that, tho' I really think I can Dispute even that, in the Negative, and may deny the Sin even in that Case, to lie in the abstracted Despair alone, or at most to be but a Sin of Infirmary there; for there is a Misfortune which happens to innocent People through mere weakness of Understanding, or distemper of Body: But if they be not such Innocent, but wicked People, and crafty enough in their Worldly Affairs, we may well conclude that Pretence of thinking they can never do their Duty, to be but an Hypocritical Excuse. Or if they be wilfully Ignorant of the Gospel Promises of Grace, to enable those that sincerely Endeavour, or else will not believe those Promises, and so neglect their Duty; then 'tis either the Sin of wilful Neglect, wilful Ignorance, or else 'tis Disbelief or Distrust, and then the Sin lies in those Causes; and 'tis but their Duty to despair of Heaven then, till they have mended those Faults: But because I need not Wrangle here, for that which is not necessary to my Cause: I care not if I grant, that despairing to do my Duty whilst I have Time and Health to do it, may be a Sin: But then despairing of Heaven till I do that Duty is no Sin. And so upon the whole that Objection against my Doctrine, pretending that it wou'd drive such *Death-bed Penitents*, as this Case speaks of, to a sinful Despair, signifies nothing,

thing, and 'tis but a false Objection: For the Dispute is not about them who have Means or Time to do their Duty; but only about them who are past all Possibility of that.

'Tis too wide a Charge against me, to say I make Despair (in General without any Limitation) to be a Duty, whereas I expressly restrain'd it to *that sort of conditional Despairing, a despairing of getting Heaven, without performing the Condition required for it.* And I think it is apparent that this sort of conditional Despair is a Duty. The most Excellent Author of the *Whole Duty of Man* (from whom I think I shall never differ in any thing) says 'tis but *Just for us* to Despair in some Cases; (*Sund. i. Parag. 25.*) and what is but Just for us to do, is a Duty. He says indeed, that is a sinful Desperation which makes a Man give over Endeavour, neglect all Duty, and go on in his Sins. But that is not the Despair I speak of; he speaks of that which is involved with Carelessness or Ignorance, Infidelity or Distrust, where indeed the Sin lies, and he makes that Despair sinful, for containing a Participation of those Sins, and as being wrong grounded. But I speak of a Despair right grounded, which is the Thing I mean by an abstracted Despair, in the true and proper Sense or strictly Speaking, that is a rational despairing of Heaven; when we deprive our selves of the Condition requisite for Heaven. And this my Sense of Despair, is that which he owns *is ordinarily so call'd*; and there he Concurs with me, that in Despairing thus, 'tis but *Just for us so to do*; that is, such Despair is a Duty. Nor do I see how calling it so, can startle or perplex a weak Understanding, further than is necessary to put them upon that Practice of good Life through Faith in Christ, which will remove the Despair, and confirm the Hope. If the Expression be unusual, I can't help that; it shou'd not frighten me out of Truth. Perhaps any Doctrine that is not common will bring unusual Expressions, and where the necessity of removing a rooted Error makes unusual (but true) Expressions sometimes

times helpful, I am no Adversary to such, tho' I am against Innovations, to no purpose, but for Disturbance, or gratifying fickle Minds. The seeming Novelty of the Thing might perhaps have surprized the Objector; yet I thank him for giving me the occasion to make it plainer.

Object. 2. to Sect. 2. Numb. 22. About the Churches Absolution.

May it not be said, first that Repentance, *μετάνοια*, *μετάνοια*, includes no more. But a real and through change of Mind from Evil to Good.

Secondly, That's the only sure Evidence that either the Sinner himself, or any other Man of him can have, that such a Change is really wrought, is a good Life. As therefore we can pronounce no Tree to be Good until it appears so, by bearing good Fruit; so can we pronounce no Repentance to be available to Salvation, until the Fruit of it (which is nothing else but a good Life) appears: And because a good Life cannot appear when Life it Self is just as an end, therefore no Man on account of a Death-bed Repentance can have any Hope, that we know of, of Salvation.

But Thirdly, That without this outward Evidence, God who is the Searcher of Hearts may know whether the Change be real, and if so, it ought to be consider'd whether we can universally pronounce every Death-bed Penitent to be in a certain State of Damnation. Christians indeed ought to be taught that no Absolution pronounc'd upon Earth will be available to them, if their Repentance be not Real: But where a Minister of the Gospel has certain Evidence that any dying Person is in a State of Damnation, it is hard to conceive how he should pronounce his Absolution in the Words of our Office for the Visitation of the Sick.

Answer, The Two first Particulars agree with me: To the Third I Answer. 'Tis impossible God shou'd see that true Change in them, which cannot be in them that die then; and that it cannot be in them, I prove throughout my Book by several Reasons, Scriptures,



tures, and Authorities of Pious and Learn'd Divines Asserting the same. I suppose this Objection was made before the Book was read out. And I have particularly spoken to it in *Sect. 3. Numb. 6.* within four or five Leaves of the end of the Book. But to that about pronouncing Damnation to, or concerning any particular Individual Person; notice shou'd have been taken of what I said in that same *Numb. 22.* where this Objection is raised, *viz. I do not presume to pre-judge any particular Person how Wicked forever: Nor after his Death do I make peremptory Judgments of this or that particular Man (much less before his Death) to his own Mis- star I leave him to fall or stand.* May not we Assert the Truth of God's general Rules to be without Exceptions, where God has given us none? Who dares make Exceptions for him, or say it can possibly be otherwise with *any one*, than God has declared it shall certainly be *with all*. May we not maintain these Things, without assuming the Prophet's Part, and saying, *thou art the Man*? Every Man shou'd Examine his own Conscience, and make a Judgment of his own Case, by these plain-dealing Doctrines: But he cannot be infallibly certain of another's particular Case, no not of one under his own Cure, who may possibly by a deep Compunction, and Hatred of himself, speak worse of himself than is really true: Who knows what has past between God and his Soul, what former Repentances he might have had, and good Deeds he might have done unknown to others; and not own'd by himself now; but to make himself more Vile in his own, and other's Eyes, knowing he had earn'd a scandalous ill Name in the World, may aggravate it, and in Self-punishment, let them think the worst of himself that can be. Tho' it may not be one in many Thousands wou'd do so, yet how know we but he may be that one.

In short, it is enough for us to assert the Judgments of God in General, but unless we wou'd be Searchers of Hearts, 'twou'd not be Duty but Presumption in any to single out the Persons of them that are certainly

tainly Damn'd. And why shou'd I then dare to deny the Churches Absolution, to them that desire it, and seem as Penitent as they can at present; any more than I dare deny 'em the Lord's Body and Blood, *Valeat quantum valere potest*. I must help him all I can. For I have no infallible Certainty that this particular Person is Damn'd, or infallibly under the Case we speak of. We shou'd be loath to think so, if we cou'd help it; and we shou'd hope there may be something better in his Life than we know of, and yet we may affirm that, if there be no better, 'tis impossible he shou'd be saved. If, is still Conditional, and therefore we cannot be absolutely Positive in a particular Man's Case; we may believe he is lost, and yet not pass Sentence; but keep some little small Hopes, enough to engage our Duty in assisting him in Charity all we can. And this answers another Objection too, which I shall call

*Objection 3. about the Office of Burial, viz, rest in him, as our hope is this our Brother doth. Where (says the Objection) there is no possibility of a thing, there can be no hopes at all of it.*

*But I Answer.* Who can be certain of the no Possibility in this particular Man's Case? I may believe, indeed, the no Possibility of it, and yet not be certain of it; but if I know so certainly all his whole Case that I cannot have the least faint Hopes, there is not, perhaps, another that knows so much: Then if my Conscience will not let me say or think that I have the least Hopes, I will come off as well as I can, and get another for that time to do the Office, that knows not as much as I do of that particular Man's Case; if none can do it, I think it's no matter if his Corps want the Office. Our Church has worded all her Offices as if she supposed all her Children to be faithful Christians, all to be saved, or else the Offices could not be for publick and common Use. But we have too much reason to know that all her Communicants are not true Christians, nor possibly to be all saved; yet we must do the Offices for all whom she has not excepted as actually out  
of

of her Communion; because, strictly speaking, none but God knows the whole Life and Practice of any particular Soul, so as to be infallibly certain of its Damnation. A common Drunkard that was a very wicked Man, and long so, and that dies suddenly in a Fit of Drunkenness, and had not so much as a *Death-Bed Repentance* it self; is it not impossible he should be saved? Or even the wickedest Death-Bed Penitents we have been speaking of, suppose they had not come to that Sickness, but been accidentally shot by a Bullet, or broke his Neck by a chance Fall, without any *Death-Bed Repentance*, are they then in a possible State of Salvation? Yet our Church allows them the Office of Burial, because they were baptized in her Communion, and not Excommunicated, must we say then, — *Rest in him, as we Hope that this our Brother doth.* And yet not say so after he had a *Death-Bed Repentance*, because we have reason to believe, and to say, such Repentance it self could not have a Possibility to save him. Must the Church Office being allow'd to his Corps, convince us of a Possibility there? Then it will convince us of the Possibility of that much worse Case, where there was no *Death-Bed Repentance* it self, which I believe the Objector would be loath to maintain.

*Objection 4.* to Sect. 3. Numb. 3. toward the end of it, about Absolution.

*Absolution* given to a Person Excommunicate, I grant, is no more but restoring him to *the Peace of the Church*. But the *Absolution* to be given to a sick Penitent supposes him to be in the Communion (i. e. *in the Peace*) of the Church; and therefore must mean something more.

*Answer.* Tho' a Son be at present not shut out from his Father's Family, but in perfect Peace with him, yet the Father may pronounce to him at any time, especially on his taking leave for a long Journey, a full Pardon of all his past Faults, with a solemn Blessing: So the Church's Absolution to her departing Son in Sickness, is a solemn Declaration of the Church's Favour to him, remitting all his past Trespases against her,

her, together with her Blessing : This is the *Something* more than what it means after Excommunication.

*Object. 5.* to Sect. 3. Numb. 1. at the end of Sir Robert King's last Letter, to what I say to those who with so much Nicety carp'd at the Stile of my Book, 'tis objected, *It seems to be a little too warm.*

*I Answer,* I know the People I spoke it to, and that nothing will sink with them that is not warm, if I should but coldly answer to that, without letting them see that I know their Malice, it would encourage them to redouble their Diligence, in crying down a Book by sinister means, which taught a Doctrine they would not have to be believed, and yet could not confute it. They maliciously gave out that I bely'd the Primates License in the Title Page, for that Doctrine: and yet I have several Letters of his own Hand-writing to me, desiring me to Print it, when he had read the Manuscript in the Year 1702 ; and some Years after; Letters exhorting me to persist in the Defence of that Doctrine I had Published against the *Death-Bed Repentance*, if any one opposed it.

And now I think this was Provocation enough from them Slanderers, for me to say what I did ; which Passage has nothing to do with the generality of other Readers, with whom I shall never find fault that they except at my Stile when they please, provided they do not make use of that, to cry down the Book, without any more ado.

*Object. 6.* to Sect. 3. Numb. 1. a little after the end of that about Stile, I said that in the Popish Doctrine of *Death-Bed Repentance*, the Reformation, perhaps, as it may be in some other things, did not go thorough stritch. 'Tis objected, *This seems to cast a Reflection on the Reformation, which I think should not be done, without some Instances could be given to support it.*

*I Answer,* If I did give them Instances, I might possibly be involved in a more tedious Dispute than I am now. I believe no Man is a greater Admirer of, or has more Honour for the Blessed Reformation, than I. But must it needs be a Reflection on a thing, that it may

may not be yet, *ab omni parte absolutum*, in the highest Perfection and Compleatness? Yet I believe the first Reformers did Wonders, and all that Men could do, at that time, in our Kingdoms. But might not some Hundreds of Years after produce some Instances unforeseen then, where some Improvements might be made by way of Addition, without marring any thing done already? If not, what need have we of Convocations? I said, but *perhaps*, and *it may be*, and truly I am not out of that doubt yet.

*Objection 7.* at Sect. 3. towards the end of Numb. 1. I reflected on some of the first Patrons of the sufficiency of the mere *Death-Bed Repentance* to Salvation in our Church; as necessary to shew one of the Means, how that Doctrine got footing, particularly by the *Lay-Presentations*. 'Tis objected, *If there were less of Jocoseness in some of the Expressions, it would be more agreeable to the Subject.*

*I Answer*, I must confess I do not see where any blame of Jocoseness lies there, nor how that sad Account can make any serious Christian laugh, whatever the Enemies of our Church may do; from whom yet the thing cannot be conceal'd, there having been many such Funeral Sermons seen in the World. Perhaps from my Reflection on them, there may be some Sarcasm gather'd; but I think it no harder than the opening of that Case with Plain-dealing might well bear, or rather oblige me to. Tho' perhaps when plain Truths of such a Nature are laid open, they will make the Scene seem somewhat jocular, whether we will or no? 'Tis, I confess, a melancholly Scene to see People cherish'd in such Principles as destroy so many Souls, and I think I cannot easily be too bitter upon it.

I wish for the Lord's sake all good Christians would seriously and deeply consider of this Case; and then I hope some better Pen would take in Hand, to make this seeming new (but true) Doctrine more acceptable to the World, than mine can ever do.





